MAULANA JALALUDDIN RUMI

TRINATH MISHRA

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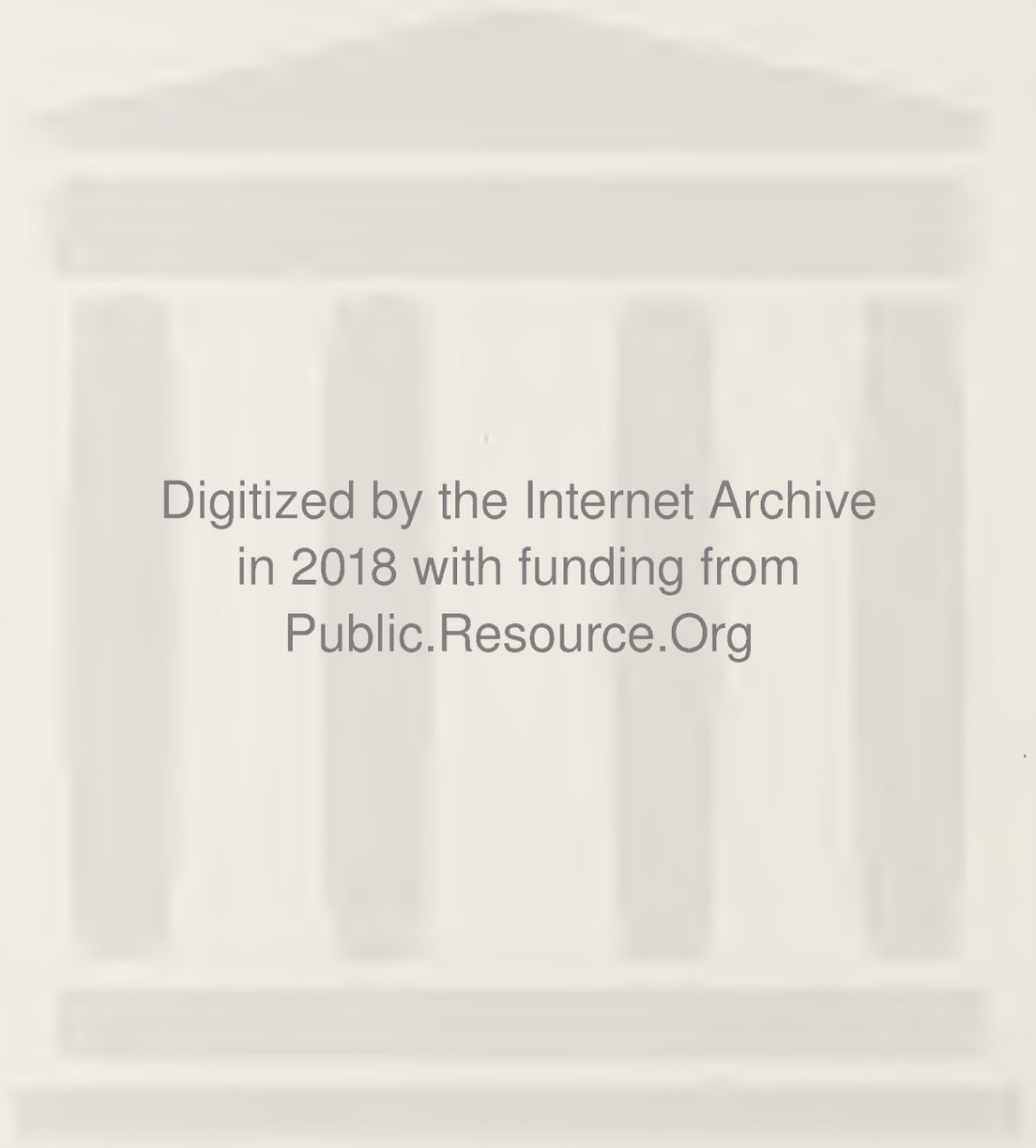

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Dr. Trinath Mishra

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MAULANA JALALUDDIN RUMI *(English)*

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Preface

From the earliest days of civilization, thoughtful persons have been pondering over the mysteries of the creation, the creator, the origin of creation and its meaning and mission.

Founders of various religions and faiths give various explanations to people. Some claimed that these answers were provided to them by the Creator himself, either directly or through His messenger. Hence, they proclaimed that these divine explanations were absolute and infallible. No questions about their validity could be raised.

Large sections of the people became followers of these faiths. However, some persons—in every community and in every period, tried to solve these riddles on their own. Their line of thinking and enquiry, sometimes, conformed to the established beliefs and sometimes deviated from them.

Many of these dissenters and independent thinkers had to suffer at the hands of the orthodox religious leaders and bigoted rulers. Free thinking is a natural trait of intellectuals. Persecution has never succeeded in putting a stop to it. In this case also, it failed to curb free and personal enquiry into these issues.

In India, free thinking was never disallowed. One finds Indians sages disputing all religious and social tenets from the earliest days. Doubts and dissent were part of every intellectual activity. In *Nasadiya-Sukta* of *Rigveda* one finds a good example of this liberal attitude of Indian sages. This flow of free thinking flourished amply in the *Upanishads* and the *Sutra* Texts.

The *Upanishads* put aside the social and legal aspects of religion and embarked upon an open and unrestrained enquiry

about the relationship between man and the Supreme Divine Element. This free thinking process culminated in the philosophy of Vedanta. According to it the entire creation is permeated by the One Element. All–the constituents as well as the universe, are visible manifestations of the invisible unitary element. Realization of this truth was held to be the mission of human life. One could reach this goal through logical deduction, meditation or devotion.

Later, the propounders of the *Bhakti Marg* (path of devotion) declared that love is the best and easiest way to achieve this objective. Love of both varieties—physical as well as spiritual, were accepted as valid ways to reach the goal. They also believed in expressing their intense feelings of love unreservedly. This school of thought enriched literature, music, dance and other streams of fine arts greatly. One finds the traditions of free thinking in other cultures also. In Greece it led to the emergence of the neo-Platonic school of philosophy. In Central Asia—Turkey, Arabia, Iran and Afghanistan, it took the form of *Tasawwuf* or *Sufism*.

A close interaction has existed between India and this region from the ancient days. Buddhism had flourished in the region till 8th century A.D. Places like Balkh and Kandahar were bastions of Buddhism. Along with trade and commerce, exchange of ideas and philosophical concepts also took place.

The establishment of the Muslim rule—Afghan and Mughal in India, accelerated this process. Saints, preachers and poets spread their message across India. This set included the *Sufis* also. The liberal and inclusive Indian culture welcomed these free thinkers. Their ideas impressed the Indian mind considerably. One can find their imprint upon the works of the medieval Bhakti poets.

In the world of *Tasawwuf,* Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi holds the highest position. Rumi's thoughts influenced the later *Sufi*

and *Bhakti* thinkers and poets greatly. Rumi rejected the orthodox and traditional way of propitiating God, which involved adherence to many rigid rules and rituals and advocated cultivating intense love and devotion for God in its place. He made music and dance – which had been deprecated by the traditional Islam, the means to achieve unity with the Supreme. On this score, ideas of Rumi and Mahaprabhu Chaitanya Dev are, surprisingly, almost identical.

In the works of Rumi the cultural interaction between India and the Middle-East is clearly reflected. Rumi's Masnavi's style resembles the style of Mahabharata, *Katha-Sarit-Sagara* and *Panchtantra*. Later, Malik Muhammand Jayasi and Goswami Tulsidas adopted this style to compose their monumental works.

The positions that are held by Tulsidas and Surdas in the Hindi literary world are held by Rumi and Hafiz in the domain of Persian poetry. These poet-laureates shine like sun and moon in the firmament of Persian poetry. Rumi is known for his philosophical thought, moral teachings and the intensity of feelings. Hafiz is renowned for his beautiful expressions and the incomparable finesse of language.

Rumi has been a favourite poet of Indian readers. His sayings are often quoted by his admirers in writings as well as in conversation. This book attempts to present the various aspects of Rumi's life and works to Indian readers.

Trinath Mishra

Author's Note

My book 'Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi', in Hindi, was published by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the year 2007.

Rumi is well-known to Indian readers. However, a comprehensive book, covering all aspects of this revolutionary thinker and poet's life and works, was not readily available in Hindi. This book filled up a void.

This book was well-received by readers. The Publisher came up with the suggestion that it should be translated into English for non-Hindi-speaking Indian readers.

In English, there are a number of books on Rumi. However, evaluation of Rumi's thought from Indian view-point was not available. This book is primarily for Indian readers. For this reason, idioms and phrases familiar to Indians have been freely used. Similarity between the Indian cultural traditions and Rumi's thoughts has been touched upon now and then for the same reason.

Transcription of Persian verses has been done keeping in mind the way Indians pronounce these words. Persian words are pronounced differently by the present-day Iranians, which would be difficult for an Indian ear to comprehend.

I hope the readers enjoy reading this book.

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I Dedicate this book to
My teacher
Dr. Mithilesh Kanti
Who made me aware of the
beauty of poetry

Mystics lost in the rapture of music : from a page of manuscript of 'masnavi-o-manavi' written on silk-paper (15th Century A.D, Central Asia). Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

Let noble thoughts come to us from all over the universe.

-Atharvaveda

Go, Soar with Plato to the empyreal sphere,

To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;

Or tread the mazy round his followers trod,

And quitting sense call imitating God;

As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,

And turn their heads to imitate the sun;

Go, teach eternal wisdom how to rule-

And turn into thyself, and be a fool.

-Alexander Pope, Essay On Man

Sufism means seizing spiritual realities and giving up what creatures possess; Sufism means kneeling at the door of the beloved, even if he turns you away; Sufism is a state in which the conditions of humanity disappear; Sufism is a blazing lightening bolt.

-Abu-al-Qasim Abd-al-Karim-al-Qushayri

Sufism: Principles and Practices

'Tasawwuf' or Sufism believes in the doctrine of non-dualism. Devotion is held to be the means to achieve this end. To create intense love for God in one's heart, so much so that one becomes non-distinguishable from Him, is the final goal of a *Sufi.*

Many theories exist about the etymology of the term *Sufi* and the origins of this school of philosophy. According to one school, Sufism had come into being in the very presence of the Prophet Mohammad. Many followers of the Prophet lived the life of extreme austerity and simplicity. They had no dwellings of their own; they slept on the terrace of a mosque at night. They came to be known as *Ahle-al-saffa* or 'the people of the terrace'. The prophet, himself, was an example of simplicity and austerity. He considered these to be very important human values. He had proclaimed that voluntary poverty is the foundation of human dignity-*Al fuqra fakhri*. Those who opted the life of poverty, simplicity and total submission to God's will came to be called as *Sufis.*

Some scholars hold the view that the term *Sufi* has originated from *Safi*, a word which literally means purity or cleanliness. As per this theory those persons who had given up all material possessions and desires and devoted themselves fully to God, came to be addressed as *Sufis*.

According to a third, view the term *Sufi* has been derived from Sufi or wool. A set of Islamic ascetics considered all worldly items of comfort or luxury to be unworthy of possession. Commonly observed religious rites, rituals and observances were

also of no relevance to them. To remain totally submerged in love of God was the only acceptable practice to them. The followers of this sect wore garments made of rough wool and sported a tall woolen cap. This costume became their hall-mark very much like the ochre-robe of Indian *Sanyasis*. Those who adopted this mode of dress came to be called as *Sufis*.

The early *Sufi* doctrines were based on some mysterious and miraculous experiences of Prophet Mohammad. Two such incidents had taken place in his life. The first related to his receiving the divine message in the cave of Mt. Hira and the second to his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, where he had the audience with the Divine. The early *Sufis* based their beliefs and practices mainly on these two experiences of the Prophet. The Prophet was their role-model. His message of simplicity, good conduct and devotion to God became their basic principle. The *Sufi* practitioners embraced asceticism. They devoted themselves fully to the service of God and the welfare of mankind. They discarded all worldly affairs and committed themselves fully to the pursuit of love for God.

Some features distinguished them from other *Muslims*. *Muslims*, generally, conducted their prayers and other religious rites e.g. offering *Namaz* and observing *Roza* etc., in congregation. *Sufis* believed in individual worship. According to them the relationship between the Lord and His devotee was a personal and bilateral relationship.

Influence of other Philosophical Thoughts

In later years *Tasawwuf* or *Sufism* imbibed many ideas and concepts from other sources also. Arab and Iranian societies had been very close from the earliest days, hence, influence of Persian cultural concepts on *Sufism* was natural. They also had regular contacts with other countries of the then civilized world-Greece, Rome, India and China. By the Middle Age these

contacts had got transformed into a close relationship. The trade between Asia and Europe was largely overland and was regulated and handled by Arabian merchants, who acted as the middlemen. Spaniards and Portuguese were trying hard to discover a plausible sea-route to the East primarily to break this Arab monopoly.

Cultural interaction was a natural sequel of the commercial and political relations. According to some scholars the synthesis of the neo-Platonism and the eastern mysticism had begun at Alexandria, the famous trade-mart of Egypt in the third century A.D., itself. Influenced by this new philosophical concept many had given up their material possessions and taken up the spiritual pursuit. This spiritual love - different from the physical love, had come to be known as the *platonic love*. Scholars of this view believe that this synthesized philosophical doctrine became the base of the *Sufi* creed. According to them, the term *Sufi* is a modified form of the Greek word *Sophy*.

It is an undisputed fact that the Greek philosophy, especially Plato's ideas, influenced *Sufism* profoundly. However, it would be fallacious to hold that the Greek philosophy was the only source from which *Sufism* emanated. *Sufi* thinkers do not reject the physical love totally. Physical love is acceptable to them. They consider it to be the first step in the direction of the spiritual plantonic love. Jami, the renowned *Sufi* thinker, counsels: *Ma Taab Aj Ishq Rue Garche Majazi Ast, Ki Aan Bahar Haqiqat Kaarsaazi Ast"; Do not shun physical love, it forms the base of the true (spiritual) love.*

Some scholar view '*Tasawwuf*' in the light of Vedanta. Indian sages had discussed issues related to creation, the human soul, the Divine Element and the inter-relationship of these elements extensively - many centuries before the advent of Islam. The Upanishads, the Smriti texts and Darshan works (the treatises on philosophical theories) deliberate upon these issues in

great detail. The Buddhist philosophers were also seized of these matters. A large segment of central Asia had come under the Vedic influence initially and the Buddhist influence subsequently. These influences had left a deep impression upon the thought-process of the people of this region. By the 8th century A.D. many Indian philosophical texts had been translated into Arabic and Persian. Scholars of this region were familiar with works like *Yoga-Vasishtha* and *Panchtantra*. Hence, it is no matter of surprise to find many Vedantic and Buddhist ideas reflected in the tenets of *Sufism*. Von Krammer and Joseph Von Hammer are of the view that concept like *Fanaa* (to become one with the Divine), *Maraaqabaa* (meditation) and the concepts of action without any care for the reward (Nishkaam-Karma) came to *Sufism* from *Vedanta* and *Yoga* schools of Indian philosophy.

Brown is of the opinion that *Sufism* was an act of protest by the Aryan culture against the imposition of Islam by the semitic Arabs. This may not be fully maintained but one definitely finds traces of Indian philosophical ideas in Sufism.

It appears that Sufi sages and scholars kept an open mind. They incorporated those concepts of other cultures and traditions which were in conformity with their own beliefs. This is the reason why one finds many principles and practices of Greek, Christian, Zoroastrian, Vedantic and Buddhisht traditions in *Sufism*. Like the clever honey-bee the *Sufi* thinker collected nectar from various blossoms of the flower-garden and formulated the doctrines of his own school.

Abu Syed Abul Khair provides us a definition of *Sufism*, which defines it in most clear terms. According to him, '*Sufism* is giving up everything'. He tells, "Remove whatever is stored in your mind; Give up whatever you have in your hand; accept unquestioningly the circumstances that you happen to face. This is *Sufism*. In other words acceptance of God's will is the basic

qualification for *Sufis*. Any doubt or discussion about one's circumstances or living conditions or any enquiry or examination of it would be against the basic belief of *Sufism* according to this definition.

The Basic Doctrine

This basic doctrine has been elaborated in detail by Imam Ghazali in his book, *Keemia-e-Saadaat*. Ghazali says, "Knowledge is an obstruction on this path. The human heart is like a lake. The five sense-organs are like five canals feeding this lake. If you desire that clean and fresh water should come out of the spring that is located at its bottom, then, you should empty the lake and close the canals first. This would stop the flow from outside completely. The second step would be digging deep. The clean and fresh water would, then, gush up from the deep and fill the void. Till the water from outside sources is present in the lake, water would not spout from its bed. Similarly, the true wisdom would not rise in the heart till it remains submerged in the knowledge supplied by the sense-organs. It is essential, therefore, to get rid of the outer knowledge."

The message of Ghazali is clear. The spiritual knowledge comes out from the devotee's heart. *Kathopanishad* had also proclaimed likewise- "*Naayamaatmaa Pravachanena Labhyah, Na Medhayaa, Na Bahudhaa Shrutena*, (True knowledge is never gained through studies or discussion or listening to discourses). Only by churning one's heart a person can obtain the cream of true knowledge. The true knowledge enlightens the heart of a Sufi. In its light he is able to visualize the true form of everything and assess correctly every situation. He realizes that everything is permeated by the Divine.

The inadequacy of the sensory perception or knowledge has been illustrated by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi in a story in a very interesting manner. The story, 'An Elephant In A Dark

Room', is a well-known story and has been told in almost all languages.

Rumi says :

Peel Andar Khana-e-Tareek Bood,
Arsaa Raa Avardaa Boodandash Hanood.
Az Baraae Deednash Mardum Basi
Andar Aan Zulmate Hamee Shud Har Kasi
Deednash Baa Chayam Chu Makun Nabood,
Abdar Aan Taareeki Ashkaf MiBasood.
Aan Yaki Raa Kaf Be Khar Tome U Fataad,
Goft Hamchu Naabdaan Ast Ein Nihaad.
Aan Yaki Raa Dast Bar Goshash Raseed
Aan bar U Joon Baad Beezan Shud Yadeed.
Aan Yaki Raa Kaf Chu Bar Paayash Basood,
Goft Shaqle Peel Deedam Chun Amood.
Aan Yaki Bar Pushte U Ba Nihaad Dast,
Goft Jood Ein Peel Chun Takhti Badast.
Ham Chuneem Har Yak Ba Juzvi Ki Raseed,
Faham Aan Mi Karad Bar Jaae Shuneed.
Az Nazar Ki Goft Shaan Shud Mukhtalif,
Aan Yaki Daanish Laqab Daal Ein Alif.
Daz Kaf Har Kas Agar Shamaa Badi,
Ikhtilaaf Az Goft Shaan Bairoon Shudi.
Chashme Husn Ham Chu Kafe Dast Ast Vabas,
Neest Kaf Raa Bar Hamaa U Dastarash.

(An elephant was kept in a dark room. Some Hindus (Indians) had brought it. A crowd collected to have a look at it. Due to the stark darkness, they could not see it. However, by touching it they tried to guess its shape and size. One touched its trunk and said, "It is like a water-pipe." Another touched its ear and said that it resembled a big fan. Another man caught hold of a leg. He pronounced, "I find that elephant is like a pillar." Next man touched its back and said, "This animal is like a flat bed," Men

guessed about the shape of the elephant according to the shape of the various body-parts of it that they came in contact with. They eloquently described its shape accordingly. One uttered 'D' while another proclaimed 'A'. Had someone carried a torch in his hand, these contradictory statements would not have been made.)

The sensory perception is much like the touching hands of these men. This story tells us that the true form of an object can not be fully comprehended with sense-organs only. To gain proper knowledge and understanding, the light of spiritual wisdom is essential. *Sufis* strongly believe that the light of the Divine Grace is essential to understand the true nature of creation.

They also hold the view that a proper analytical study and appreciation of the Divine Message is imperative to acquire this core knowledge. If a man confines himself to the apparent literal meaning of the messages related to him by the Divine through prophets and spiritual guides, he can never reach the destination.

Following this advice *Sufis* set great store by the analytical study of the texts of *Quran-Sharief*. Nasir-I-Khusro-Alavi says:

Shor Ast Chun Dariya
Bemisl Zaahir Tanjil,
Taaweel Chun Lolosat
Sue Mardum Dur Na.

The Holy Book is like a sea. Scholars dive deep into it to obtain the pearls (of wisdom) verily,

Jin Khoja Tin Painyaa
Gahare Paani Paith,
Ve Kyaa Moti Paainge
Jo Rahe Kinaare Baith.

Those, who search, find. Hence, dive deep. Who sit at the shore shall never be able to lay their hands on a pearl.

Holding fast to these concepts, *Sufi* saints undertook the task of analyzing and examining the various Islamic beliefs and practices and developing their own discipline for spiritual pursuit on the basis of their findings. This *Sufi* system was basically individualistic. It was based on their own study and experiences. To a casual viewer, therefore, it appears to be at variance on many points from the traditional Islam.

Sufism and the Traditional Islamic Beliefs

'Kalma-e-Shahadat' is the first fundamental principle of Islam. One has to believe and proclaim that 'there is one God (Allah) and Mohammad is His Prophet'. It is compulsory for every Muslim to believe in this concept explicitly and proclaim it repeatedly.

Sufis are also monotheists and have no objection to *Kalma*. However, they do not consider it necessary to pronounce it repeatedly. The *Sufi* view on this point has been explained beautifully by Abu Sayed Abul Khair.

Az Saahat Dile Ghubaar Kasrat Raftan,
Be Jaan Ki Be Larzaa Dar Wahdat Saftan;
Maghroor Sakhun Ma Shav Ki Tauheede Khuda,
Waahad Deedan Bood Na Waa Had Guftan.

(Faith in monotheism comes from vision of the One God, not by repeatedly proclaiming that there is One God.)

The second basic rule of Islam is *Salaat* or prayer. It is enjoined upon every Muslim to offer prayers five times a day. The time-schedule for these prayers is also fixed. A true prayer needs to be offered with full concentration of mind

and a devout heart. *Sufis* believe that a true devotee keeps praying all the time, twenty-four hours a day. For him worship of God is not a ritual.

The third main principle of Islam is *Zakaat* or to give money in charity. Every Muslim is required to give a part of his earning to the poor and the needy. Since *Sufis* practice non-possession in totality, they own no wealth. They have no earning as well. In short, They have noting to give. In fact Sufis believe that true charity is service to the people and not merely parting with money. Hence, they devote themselves in serving the poor, the old and the sick always.

The fourth basic rule of Islam is observance of *Roza*, fasting in day-time in the month of Ramzan for the entire month. A *Sufi* depends totally upon Lord's bounty for his livelihood. He does not seek any alms from people. He lives on whatever is provided by his admirers and followers. He eats frugally and simply. In this way a *Sufi* fasts almost round-the-year.

The fifth rule is about the *Haj* pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. All those Muslims who are healthy, who can see properly and who possess the required resources are required to undertake the *Haj* pilgrimage at least once in their life-time. '*Kaaba*' (the black stone) is the focal point of this pilgrimage. The mosque within which the black-stone slab of *Kaaba* is enshrined is called *Bait-Allah* or The House of God.

Sufis believe in *Wahad-tul-Wajood* (*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahmam*), which means that God is present everywhere. The belief that human heart is His favourite dwelling, is central to the *Sufi* philosophy. Abu Sayed Abul Khair expresses this *Sufi* belief in a poetic manner in a *Rubaai* (quatrain):

Purseed Yaki Manzile Aan Mehar Kujast,
Goftam Ki Dile-Man Ast U Raa Manzil;
Goftaa Ki Dilat Kujast Goftam Bar U
Purseed Ki U Kujast Goftam Dar Dil.

A person asked, where does your beloved dwell? I told him, "In my heart." He again asked, "where is your heart?" I replied, "It is with Him." He repeated his old question, "where does He really live?" I answered, "within the heart."

Since the human heart is the temple of God, hence, not hurting anyone's heart is considered the first step towards cherishing the Lord by *Sufis*. For them to harm anyone or to cause grief to any person is a crime against God. Naziri, a *Sufi* saint, says:

Za Khud Hargiz Nai Aaraazam Dilee Raa,
Ki Mi Tarsam Dare U Jaae Tu Baashad.

I do not hurt anyone's heart because I know that You dwell there.

For this reason *Sufis* consider doing good to others and serving the poor to be more important than undertaking the *Haj* pilgrimage. Hafiz says:

Mabaash Dar Pai Aazaar Wa Har Che Khvahi Kun,
Ki Dar Shariate-Maghir Az Ein Gunahi Neest.

Do whatever pleases you; just do not hurt others. In our code of conduct there is no greater sin then it.

This belief of Sufis sounds like an echo of the famous statement of Vyasa:

Ashtadash puraneshu
Vyasaya Vachana-Dvayan
Paropa Karaya Punyaya
Papaya Para-Pidanam

Vyasa has made only two statements in all his eighteen Puranas (Chronicles).

Doing good to others is Punya (the meritorious act) and harming others is Papa the sinful act.

One should not conclude from this discussion that *Sufis* were against these Islamic beliefs. In fact, in the first stage of their spiritual quest almost all *Sufi* saints adhered to these five basic Islamic rules. Only when they accomplished the higher stage- when they came to realize the true nature of their self, they discarded the conventional code of conduct and ritualism.

Sufis and the traditional Muslims hold similar ideas about creation. Both subscribe to the view that God created the world because He wanted to manifest Himself. Explaining this Divine desire *Sufis* say that God is the epitome of beauty and beauty's nature is to exhibit itself. It wants to be admired by others. In the words of Nizami:

Nako Rue Taab Mastoori na
Daarad chu,
Darbandi Sar Az Rozan
Bar Aarad.

A beautiful face can not remain hidden. If you shut the door it will appear in the window.

God manifests Himself in the myriad forms of the creation so that He may admire and enjoy His own beautiful aspects. Omar Khaiyyam describes this wondrous state in this way:

But Goft Ba But-Parast
Kaae Aabad Maa,
Daani Zaa che Rue Gashtaa
Ai Saazad Maa.

Bar Maa Baa Jamaale-Khud
Tajjaligah Daasht,
Aan Kas Ki Tast Naazir.
Wa Shaahdaa Maa.

The idol asked the idolator, "Why do you bow before me? (Do you know the reason?)". "He (God) who looks at me with your eyes exhibits His beauty through me."

Along with beauty ugliness also co-exists in this world. Vices like obsessive attachment, animus, cruelty and jealousy are found by the side of happiness. *Sufis* believe that this background of the dark contrasting colour was created by God to bring out the qualities of beauty and bliss all the more sharply. When a bouquet is placed against a contrasting background, colours of its flowers come out more clearly and sharply. Unless one undergoes a spell of sorrow, he cannot fully enjoy the hours of bliss.

Steps of the *Sufi* Spiritual Path

The *Sufi* spiritual system consists of seven steps. As Attar says, a practitioner has to climb these steps one-by-one to reach the highest level, the level of non-duality.

These seven steps are:—

a) *Talab* ie. the yearning;

b) *Ishq* ie. Love;

c) *Maarifat* ie. knowledge about God;

d) *Istighanaa* ie. free-thinking;

e) *Tauhid* ie. monotheism

f) *Hairat* ie. to get over-whelmed by the Divine Beauty;

g) *Fuqro-Fanaa* ie. Giving up all material possessions and union with the Divine.

A *Sufi* initiate uses different methods at these stages to worship the Divine Beauty. In the beginning he sings His praises. He describes His beauty at length verbally as well as in written expression and exults in his new-found joy. Then he contemplates upon His beauty internally-in his heart. These practices are known as *Jali* and *Zikr* (chanting Lord's names audibly or silently).

These practices take him to the state of *Haal* (ecstasy), when he forgets everything related to his physical existence. This state of *Haal* is comparable to the state of the *Turiya-Samadhi* of the Yoga school of Indian philosophy.

Advancing further he reaches the stages where he is able to sublimate his ego completely. He becomes one with the Divine. This annihilation of ego is called *Fanaa* and the process of the unification is called *Baqaa*.

Ultimately he achieves his mission, that is, the state of non-duality. This state is called *Wasl*. At this stage he acquires four divine attributes—*Haq* (Truth); *Jamaal* (Beauty); *Jalaal* (Dignity/Brilliance) and *Kamaal* (perfection). These are the attributes of the Lord. Those who reach this stage spontaneously cry out, *An-al Haq*- 'I am God (Truth)' justifiably. This outburst of *Sufis* can be compared to the proclamation of Indian Vedantis, *Aham Brahmasmi*.

A *Sufi* remains in the blissful sight of God from the state of *Haal* onwards. He discovers the reflections of the Divine Beauty in nature and all objects around him and revels at their sight. Dawn, Sun-rise, clouds, snow-capped mountain-tops, fast flowing streams, a starry sky, the pleasant sight of a full-moon and a flower-bed full of fragrance—all these and other such sights appear to him to be the manifestations of Lord's beauty. In fact, he finds Lord's presence every where. "I find my dark

–coloured lover every-where" an Indian Bhakti poet had said. The *Sufi* also feels likewise.

The concept of creation held by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi and some other Sufi thinkers is at variance from the commonly held belief of Muslims. Islam, generally, subscribes to the Biblical concept of creation according to which God had created Adam from dust and started the process of creation. Rumi holds that creations is an evolutionary process and man is a part of the evolutionary chain. This living organism emerges out of non-living materials. Plant is the initial form of life. Subsequently comes the animal form. Then the life-force gradually upgrades itself. It graduates to the form of a human being. The Grace of God can bestow a yet higher form to a man. If he endeavours sincerely and constantly he can obtain the form of an angel and even more. He can achieve the union with God, the highest state. The example of Prophet Mohammad is cited in support of this theory. Through his devotion to God he had achieved the status which was beyond the reach of even the angels. He had aequired the mandate to guide the living and the non-living and take them on the path of devotion to God. *Sufis* do believe in following the teaching of the Prophet but their interpretation of his message varies from other schools of Muslim theology.

Love for man is considered to be the first step on the path of love for God by *Sufis*. Rumi, himself, took the devotional path of *Sufism* when he submerged himself totally in love of his friend and mentor, Shams Tabrezi.

Total surrender to God's will is the second most important principle of *Sufis*. In this way they are akin to Hindu ascetics and Buddhist monks. The mission of their life was devotion to God and welfare of the mankind. They were impervious to the rigours of their impoverished life. It is said that the famous *Sufi* saint, Malik Ibn Dinvar, had given up eating dates, the favourite

fruit of Arabs, lest it turned into an obsessive habit. Muhammad Wasi, another *Sufi* saint, used to eat only the water-soaked bread. He had no care for any other dish. Sirri Sakati one day broke his earthen water-pot, his only material possession. Filling it with water and caring for it appeared to be a hindrance in the path of devotion for him.

Maroof Karkhi had described in his will that even the clothes on his body should be taken off and given to the needy on his death. As he had come, so should he depart, was his desire.

A *Sufi*- if we attempt to define him precisely was a man of pure heart, who devoted himself completely to the service of God. He possessed an enlightened mind. He had progressed beyond the limits of worldly knowledge and reached the realm of the spiritual wisdom by pursuing the path of *Shariat* (Good conduct), *Tariqat* (mystic practices), *Haquiqat* (truth), and *Maarifat* (knowledge). Once he reached his destination he discarded these means. The path was no longer relevant to him. Now, like Mulla Shah, he could declare:

"Panjaa Dar Panjaae Khuda Daaram, Man Che Parvaae Mustafi Daaram,

"Now I have caught the hand of God; now I do not need the help of the Prophet."

These beliefs distanced *Sufis* from the traditional doctrines and rituals of the conventional Islam. In the Caliphate period, Muslim theologians had come to depend upon the patronage of the state for their livelihood. They had become enamoured of the pomp and show of the Caliphs life style and emulated their example. They interpreted the Islamic doctrines and canons to further the interests of their patrons. It was hard for them to tolerate the free-thinking *Sufis*. They felt threatened. To safeguard their own interests as well as of their patrons they

denounced these truthful and open-minded *Sufis* as heretics and sinners and heaped atrocities upon them. At the altar of truth and true knowledge many *Sufis* laid down their lives. The name of Mansoor-e-Hallaj tops the long list of those free- thinkers, who achieved martyrdom for the sake of their true beliefs.

The Martyrdom of Mansoor

The full name of Mansoor-e-Hallaj was Al-Hussain-Abu-Abdulla. He was born in 850 A.D. in Arabia. His grandfather was a fire-worshipper. His family belonged to Persia originally where fire-worship was the norm. His father had converted to Islam. It seems that either carpentary or trade in timber was his family's occupation. *Hallaj* (timber trader), the appendage to his name suggest this. He was inclined towards spiritualism from his young days. In 879 A.D., he went to Basra for studies. There he became a disciple of Amr-Makki, a *Sufi* practitioner. His teacher initiated him into *Sufism.*

After being ordained as a *Sufi,* he undertook the *Haj* pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca. On this issue – the *Haj* pilgrimage, there was a dispute between him and his teacher. As a result he left Basra and shifted to Ahwaj. From there he went again to Meeca for the *Haj.* Subsequently, he settled at Baghdad. There he studied the Greek philosophy. He traveled widely to acquire knowledge of the various schools of philosophy. He came to India in 896 A.D. He visited Sindh, Gujarat, Punjab and Kashmir. He interacted with Indian scholars and acquired an understanding of the Vedantic and Buddhist concepts. His thinking was much influenced by the ideas of these two streams of Indian philosophy. He went on a *Haj* again and on return settled at Ahwaj. He propounded the non-dualistic concept of *Sufism* here. *An-al-Haq* (I am the Truth)- identical

to *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am the all pervading Divine) of the Vedantis was proclaimed at Ahwaj.

Mansoor set a new regimen to achieve this goal. About it he says:

Naqshe Haq Awwal Ba Jaan Anddakhtan
Baz U Raa Dar Jahaan Anddakhtan
Naqshe Jaan Taa Dar Jahaan Gardad Tamaam
Mi Shavad Deedaare Haq Dedaare Aam.
Ai Khanak Mardi Ki Az Yak Hu E U
Nai Falak Daarad Tawaaf Ku E U
Naqshe Haq Daari? Jahaan Nakhchire Tast
Hammanaan Taqdeer Ba Tadbeere Tast.

In the beginning meditate upon God in your heart. Then perceive the world as His manifestation. If God is present in a man's heart, then he can see Him in all objects of this world.

Blessed is the man whose cry-his yearning, goes around the nine skies.

Have you realized Him in your heart? If it is so, then you have mastered the world. All things, even the providence, would follow your directions.

One can discern the echo of '*Tat Tvam Asi*' (Thou Art That), and '*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahmam*' (All things are manifestations of God) - the cardinal aphorisms of the Vedanta, in the above statement of Mansoor.

He opposed blind adherence to traditional beliefs and rituals. According to him every individuals was free to determine his line of approach to the Divine. Faith and the spiritual pursuit were matters of an individual's choice.

He believed that intense love for God would help a devotee to discard his sence of duality. He advises:

Aashiqi Dar Naare U Waa Sokhtan,
Sokhtan Bar Naare U Naa Sokhtan.
Zaan Ki U Dar Ishq-o-Khidmat Aqdam Ast,
Aadam Az Asraare U Naa Mahram Ast.
Chak Kun Pairaahane Taqleed Raa
Taa Biya Mozi Azo U Tauheed Raa,

To incinerate oneself in His fire is the real love. If not done so, then, love is meaningless.

He is the original fount of love and service. Even Adam was ignorant of his mysteries.

Tear away the tunic of tradition; Only then would you be able to reach Him.

This individualistic approach of Mansoor alarmed and annoyed the orthodox traditionalists. They lodged a complaint with the reigning Abbasid Caliph alleging that Mansoor was spreading heretic rumours against Islam. Caliph Muqtadir acting on the complaint, imprisoned Mansoor. To make him recant, Mansoor was severely tortured in jail but he refused to budge. In 902 A.D. he was sentenced to death. His decapacitated head was hung at the jail-gate to deter others from following his foot-prints.

The death-sentence caused no fear in the liberated mind of Mansoor. He accepted it as the Lord's blessing. God had found a way to release him from his physical bonds. He chanted while being marched to the beheading spot, *A Qatlo Yaa Sakati Ann-Fi Qatli Hayaati*

(Kill me, my friend ! Death, in fact, is my life).

The Martyrdom of Mansoor caused a commotion in the intellectual circles of the contemporary Islamic Society. The orthodox section had hoped that his killing would put a stop to free-thinking. In fact, it had just the opposite effect. Mansoor

became the guiding star of all free thinkers. Many *Sufi* saints and thinkers emulated his example and made the greatest sacrifice for their beliefs. The most prominent among them were Sheikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, Abdul Mali Abdulla Ibn Abu Bakr, Ainul Kuzat Hamdani and Sarmad. Sarmad was beheaded by the order of the bigoted Indian Mughal king, Aurangzeb. His grave still stands on the steps of Delhi's Jama Masjid-where he was beheaded, as a mute witness of this ghastly and barbaric act.

At the pronouncement of his death-sentence Sarmad had remarked smilingly,

Umre Sat Ki Aawaaz-e-Mansoor Kuhan Shud,
Man Az Sare-Nau Jalwa Dihan Daar-o-Rasan Raa,

The voice of Mansoor has not been heard for a long time. I wish to show the wonderous shine of the noose once again.

The sacrifice of Mansoor was profusely eulogized by later *Sufi* poets and saints. Praising Mansoor Hafiz says,

Kashad Naqshe Anaa-al-Haq
Bar Zamine Khoon,
Chu Mansoor Ar Kushi
Bar Daaram Imshab.
Chu Mansooraan Muraade
Aanaan Bar Daarand Bar Daarand,
Ki Baa Ein Dard Agar
Darband Darmaan And Darmaanand.

If you crucify me tonight like Manssor, my blood would write on the ground "I am the Truth."

Only those, who mount the cross like Mansoor, achieve their cherished goal.

Those who try to find a way to escape this predicament, never reach their destination,

In other words, only sacrifice can lead to fulfillment. If a person deserts the true path for fear of his life, he would never find it again. He would keep wandering in search of it.

Kabir, the famous saint-poet of India, endorses this view of Mansoor, Sarmad and Hafiz, when he says:

Kabiraa Yeh Ghar Prem Kaa,
Khaalaa Kaa Ghar Naahi;
Sees Kaati Dar Par Dharai,
Taa Par Raakhe Paaye.

O Kabir! This is the abode of (the true) love; it is not the house of your aunt.

You have to severe your head and place it at the doorstep and then enter (this abode) by placing your foot upon it.

Mansoor was the role-model for Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. Speaking of his sacrifice, Rumi says, 'whenever a cruel and unjust judge would pick up his pen, a Mansoor would be seen on the cross,' Inspite of the harsh and bitter opposition *Sufism* marched on. *Sufis* set up *Khanqahs* (monasteries) to shelter their disciples. Poetry, music and ecstatic dancing were inherent parts of their life in these *khanqahs*. They earnestly pursued these practices in these shelters.

As the time progressed the *Sufi* Community got divided into a number of sects or *Silsilas*. *Qadiriya*, *Naqshbandi*, *Chishtia*, *Suhrawardiya* and *Maulviya* are the prominent *Silsilas of Sufis*. The *Maulviya* sect, which is also spelled as *Mevlavi*, is based on the teachings of Maulana Jalaluddin

Rumi. Music and dance are considered as the main means to achieve spiritual ecstasy by the followers of this tradition. The followers of Rumi are nick-named as the Whirling Dervishes by the western chroniclers due to this reason.

Sufi thoughts, which are based on the concepts of humanity and love, influenced the intellectual world greatly. India had never proscribed free- thinking, hence, *Sufism* found a fertile ground to grow and prosper in it. The poets, philosophers and spiritual practitioners of the Bhakti period were greatly impressed and influenced by *Sufism*. Its influence persisted in later periods also. Indian preachers like Ramanand, Kabir and Nanak incorporated many *Sufi* elements in their works. Mansoor, Rumi Hafiz, Sadi and Sarmad are favourite poets of Indian readers even today.

The wine-house, the wine, the addict and the wine-server- *Maikhana*, *Sharaab*, *Rind* and *Saqi*, are repeatedly mentioned in the *Sufi* poetry. Thes terms are used metaphorically and symbolically. Wine symbolises intense love. Wine –house stands for the rendezvou. The wine-server stands for the guide or the beloved. *Sufis* used these symbols as they wanted to stand apart from the orthodox section. This was a way to assert their independence. In reality, their life was far away from these luxuries. They lived a very simple and frugal life.

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A view a West-Asian royal court; from an illustrated manuscript of Firdausi's 'shahnama' (1420 A.D), Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

O Nakhshabi, love of God can be
a consuming fire;
Under his cloak the novice dervish
burned on the street.
This was pitiful, but all agreed
it was for the best;
Bits of clothing and ashes showed
that his death was complete

-Ziauddin Nakhshabi: Tutinama

To lose itself into the sea,
Is the delight of every drop,
The pain, beyond bounds,
becomes its own balm.

-Mirza Ghalib.

Rumi's Era: Historical Developments

A man's personality, thoughts, and outlook- which influences his works considerably, are much conditioned by the historical situation, social conditions and cultural traditions of his time. Therefore, a brief review of these factors is useful to appreciate the works of a person.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi was born in the thirteenth century of the Christian era. This period holds an important place in the history of Islam. Seven hundred years had passed since its emergence. In this period it had achieved great success in the political, military, economic and social fields. Under the capable leadership of the first four Caliphs- Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali, Islamic forces had conquered the two great empires of the contemporary world- Byzantine and Persia. The Islamic flag was fluttering over the Arabian peninsula, Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Syria and the northern Africa.

Now Islam, after having crossed the Asian and African frontiers, was knocking at the door of Europe. Tariq had established Islamic rule in Spain after crossing the Isthmus of Gibraltar in the 8th century.

Using Spain as the base Islam had spread its wings over other parts of Europe. By the beginning of the 13th century it held away over Sicily, northern Italy, Provence and some parts of Switzerland.

The east was also not un-affected by the on-slaught of Islamic expansion. The slave dynasty was firmly rooted in the Indian soil. The Caliph of Baghdad had accorded recognition to

Iltutmish, the founder of the Slave Dynasty, as the ruler of India in 1229 A.D.

In this way Islam had come to possess half of the contemporary civilized world- from Spain to India.

Equality, strong commitment to the faith, simplicity and sound character – the integral elements of Islam, were the factors behind this grand success. The Prophet and the first four Caliphs had set the ideals of simplicity and exemplary moral conduct before the world. They considered it to be their supreme duty to spread this new message of Islam undeterred by hardships and obstacles. They set aside their personal differences to achieve this goal. Equality and simplicity were the main pillars of this new message.

The political power soon changed this picture. Deterioration crept into the religious, moral and cultural spheres of the Islamic society. Successive victories leading to this vast empire had brought riches in abundance to the Islamic ruling class. The opulent and luxurious life-style of the Byzantian and Persian rulers presented new options of life-style before them. They could not isolate themselves from this evil influence. The Caliphs of the Umayyid dynasty were greatly enamoured by the luxurious living style of the Byzantians. The Abbasids favoured the Persian Style- a life of indolent ease.

These new centres of Islamic culture distanced themselves from the simple and austere life-style of the desert people and adopted the colourful life styles of the Byzantine and Persian rulers in its place.

The religious preachers and theologians followed suit and emulated their patrons. They gave up the task of preaching and propagating the original tenets of Islam. They stressed upon only those traditions and rituals which supported and favoured the perpetuation of their patrons' authority. The military success and

the new found political power had gone to the Arabs' head. Arabs-contrary to the basic Islamic principles, treated other Islamic communities as inferiors. Divorcing the concepts of equality, they termed Iranians and other non-Arab Muslims as *Azam* (dumb) and *Mawali* (Slave). Reaction to this crass display of pride and insolence by Arabs was bound to occur. In Iran, this reaction took the form of the *Shuabia* movement.

Assassination of Ali and the brutal killing of his sons split the Islamic fraternity. It got divided into two sects- Sunnis and Shias. The 13th century, in this way, witnessed the glory and the onset of decadence of Islam. On one hand, it saw the Islamic political power at its zenith; on the other it also saw the beginning of its moral and cultural decline.

There was political reaction also to the spread of the Islamic imperialism. In the West it took the form of the Crusades. In the East it exhibited itself in the form of Mongol invasions.

The Crusades started in the year 1096 A.D. Its original mission was to liberate the Christian holy places of pilgrimage – Jerusalem and Bethlehem in Palestine, from Islamic clutches. However, soon its main objective came to be the dismantling of the Islamic imperial structure. This explains why most of the battles of this three hundred years long military compaign were fought on battle-grounds far away from Palestine.

The Mongol power rose in the East like a typhoon. In the first half of the 13th century, Mongols, under the leadership of Changez Khan, defeated Allauddin Khwarizm Shah and acquired control over Khwarizm, Bukhara, Samarkand, Zarafshan, Merv, Nishapur, Herat and Faras (corresponding to the present-day Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Turkestan (Chira) and the South- eastern parts of Iran). The Mongolian warfare was very different from others. They made no discrimination between

combatants and noncombatants. Brutal killings mistreatment of women and children, slaughtering of umarmed and innocent civilians, desecration of places of worship, ravaging institutions of learning and destruction of cities by arson were parts of the Mongol war strategy. To grab whatever came their way was lawful to them. Their victories turned teeming villages and towns into graveyards. Twelve lakh inhabitants of Khwarizm and seven lakh residents of Merv—women, children and old men included, had been slaughtered in one go. A tall pyramid had been made with human skulls at Nishapur by them to mark their victory.

Changez Khan died in 1227 A.D. but the juggernaut of destruction put into motion by him rolled on. In 1215 A.D. Halaqu Khan, one of his grandsons, had become the governor of Persia. He mounted an attack on Baghdad, the centre of Islamic civilization and culture. The defenders of Baghdad could not repel the Mongolian attack. After conquering it, Halaqu Khan destroyed it completely. The Caliphs of Baghdad had ruled half the world for six centuries. Sciences, arts and other branches of learning had flourished here under their patronage. Baghdad had become the confluence of the eastern and the western cultural streams. In one stroke Halaqu Khan obliterated the efforts and achievements of centuries. More than a million citizens were put to the sword. Hundreds of scholars, literateres, scientists and students perished. Thousands of books were torched. Colleges, schools and libraries were razed to ground.

This tragedy made Sadi, the celebrated Persian poet, extremely sad. He wondered why the Prophet had not come to the rescue of the poor Baghdadians:

Aasmaan Raa Haq Bood,
Gar Khoon Biyaarad barzamin,
Bar Zawaal Mulke Mustasim
Ameere-al-Momin.

Ai Muhammad Gar Qayaamat,
Sar Baroon Aari za Khalk,
Sar Baroon Aar wa Qayaamat
Darmyaane Khalk Been.

It would be only proper if heaven
Sheds tears of blood upon earth,
At the doom caused to the country of
Mustasim, the commander of the faithful
O Mohammad! If you are going to
Raise your head on the Day of Judgement,
Do so now and see the doom
That has visited the world meanwhile.

Mongol attacks and atrocities on Muslim countries and their civilisation and culture continued unabated throughout this century. Only when Mongols embraced Islam in the beginning of the 14th century did the cycle of destruction stop.

These political developments, naturally, affected the cultural and literary activities of the people of this region and the neighbourhood. It affected them in two ways. Firstly, it caused dispersal of Islamic scholars and thinkers which put them into contacts with their counter-parts of other cultural traditions. They came in touch with Greek philosophers, Christian theologians, Buddhist and Vedantic thinkers and Zoroastrian ideologues.

Secondly, it brought the Europeans, Mongol, Chinese and Indian People living in the peripheral areas into close contact with the Islamic thinkers. Scholars of this area acquired an insight into Islamic doctrines. This intellectual interaction led to the incorporation of the neo-Platonic concepts into Islamic philosophy in the form of *Wahadat-al-wajood* (Omnipresence of the Divine) and the Indian Buddhist and Vedantic ideas as *Fanaa-fi-Allah* (to get submerged in the Divine).

This process of cultural exchange led to the birth of the Renaissance in Europe. In the East, Islamic egalitarian influence led to the emergence of a number of monotheistic religious reform movements which are commonly referred to as the Bhakti Marg (the path of devotion).

This bird's eye view of the historical environment of Rumi's era would help us to understand and appreciate his personality and his poetry. These developments had a profound impact on the course of his life and are reflected in his thoughts and expressions often.

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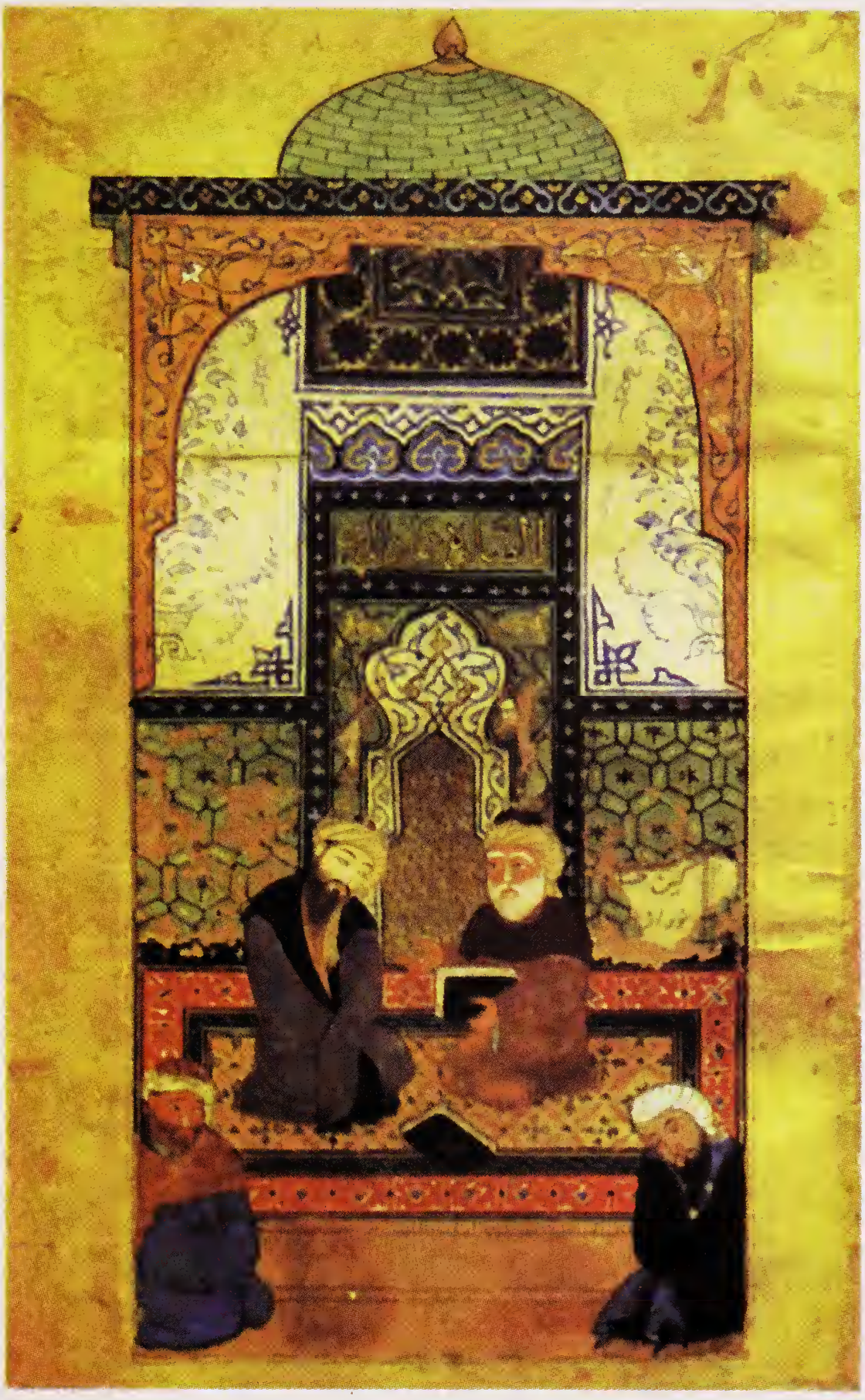

Rumi and Shams Tabrezi; from Central Asian manuscript.
Courtesy, National Museum,
New Delhi

Of all the beauties that lie in the dust below,
Only a few could appear as tulip and rose,
How many more lovelies were laid to rest : who knows?

-Mirza Ghalib

If you once become
the dust of the feet of king of Tabrez,
All knowledge of Divinity
will be revealed to you.
From his poetry the fragrance of wine
infiltrates my soul,
It makes my imagination
surge like an ocean.
If one reads 'Diwan-i-shams-ul-Haq'
with faith,
He will become free from self-conceit:
'I and We'.

-Sachal Sarmast

Rumi: A Brief Life-sketch

Jalaluddin Rumi was born on 30th September, 1207 A.D. (6, Rabi-al-Awwal, 604 Hijri era) and he died on 17th December, 1273 A.D.. His birth place is Balkh, a town in the north-western Afghanistan. Balkh was an important centre of education, culture and trade. It had been so from ancient period. It had been the capital of the Bactrian Greek rulers, who called it 'Baxtrish'. In ancient Indian texts it is mentioned as Bahlika. Balkh was a convenient, hence a favourite, trade-mart of traders from India, Iran, China and other neighbouring countries. It had become a preminent centre of Buddhism in the years of the Shaka and Kushara rulers.

In the Islamic period also, Balkh continued to thrive as a cultural centre. Its scholars, who were called 'Barmak' or 'Bermicides' where renowned for their learning. According to linguists, 'Barmak' is derived from the Sanskrit word *Pramukh* (Chief). According to them these scholars hailed from Kashmir. The Abbasid Caliphs of Baghdad had settled them at Balkh. These Barmak scholars had translated many Greek and Sanskrit books into Arabic.

The Social and Family Environment

This long cultural and intellectual interaction had imparted an analytical and liberal attitude to the inhabitants of Balkh. As a result *Sufism* did not have to face any opposition at Balkh and it prospered in its tolerant environment. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Balkhi, Abu-Ali-Shaqiq Balkhi and Abu Abdulla Ibn Fazal Balkhi were the pioneers of *Sufism* in this region. The ancestors of the famous Indian *Sufi* poet, Amir Khusro, often referred

to as *Tuti-e-Hind* (the parrot of India), whose Hindi and Persian songs still bring joy to the people of India, belonged to this city.

Among the pioneers of *Sufism,* the name of Abu Ishaq Ibrahim-bin-Adam or Abu-bin-Adam is the most well known. There is a striking resemblance between his life-story and that of Gautama Buddha. Like Buddha, he, too, was born in a royal family. He, too, had renounced the life of royal pomp and luxury and adopted the life of an ascetic in order to gain knowledge. He had meditated in a cave for nine long years in complete isolation. This cave was located near Nishapur. Subsequently he lived in a desert for fourteen years.

Many poems were composed about a legend associated with him in many languages. According to it, once, in his dream, he saw an angel writing something in a register.

"What are you writing?" Abu Bin Adam enquired. The angel replied, " I am listing the names of those persons who have dedicated their life to the service of God." Abu-Bin-Adam asked, "Does my name figure in it?"

On getting a negative reply he prayed that whenever the list of those persons, who have dedicated their life to serve the mankind, is made, his name should be entered into it.

Next night the same angel reappeared before him in dream. He had a scroll containing the names of those who had spent their lives serving God. Abu Bin Adam's name was at the top of it.

The moral of the story is that service to mankind is indeed service to God. Abu Bin Adam saw God manifested in all living creatures. On this point his view and the view of the Indian Vedantis appear to be identical.

Abu Ali Shaqiq Ibn Ibrahim-al-Azdi was also known for his bold and liberal ideas. A dialogue between him and a Sheikh

(Preacher) became very famous. It was about the nature of the true devotees. "True devotees are those who, when they receive something, thank and praise God and when they are denied, endure with patience," the Sheikh opined.

Shaqiq was not ready to accept this definition. He retorted that all dogs of Balkh would qualify to be categorized as true devotees of God according to this definition.

It is the nature of beasts to express gratitude on receiving something and wait patiently when denied. To accept this animal behavior as true devotion would be fallacious.

"A true devotee renders thanks when he is denied and whenever he is given anything, he prefers to give it to others to enjoy," Shaqiq replied.

Jalaluddin Rumi inherited this liberal atmosphere. His grandfather, Hussain Ibn Ahmed Khatibi and father, Bahauddin ibn-al-Hussain-al-Khatibi were well known *Sufi* thinkers and teachers of their times. Students and scholars came from far and wide to learn at their feet. Bahauddin was popularly known as 'Sultan-ul-Ulema' (the king of scholars) in the region. Both the scholars- the father and son, emphasized upon simplicity, frugality and equality, the basic tenets of Islam. This often led to debates between them and others, who were under the spell of the Greek and Roman philosophy.

The court of Sultan Muhammad Khwarizm Shah, the ruler of Balkh, was dominated by the Greek camp. Fakhruddin Razi was their leader. He was a minister of the Sultan and had been his tutor also. He could not stand the fame and popularity enjoyed by Bahauddin. He grew jealous of Bahauddin. He poisoned the ears of the Sultan against Bahauddin. He alleged that Bahauddin coveted the royal treasure and was conspiring with his followers to de-throne the Sultan. The Sultan put Bahauddin to a test. He offered the keys of the royal treasury

to Bahauddin. The Sultan proposed that Bahauddin should run the administration hence forth.

Spiritualism and worldly power do not mix. Bahauddin refused to even touch the keys. In very clear words he told the Sultan that he did not have any desire for power and pelf. He also declared that since the Sultan was wary of his activities and suspected disloyalty on his part, he would leave Balkh with his family and followers and seek shelter elsewhere. Balkh was no longer an acceptable living location for him.

A far-sighted thinker like Bahauddin must have realized that a disaster was to overtake Balkh. The Mongol power was increasing rapidly in the east. The local ruling class was mired in a life of luxury and ease. It had lost touch with the essence of Islam-community-life based on equality and simplicity, the source of its strength. The courtiers and religious leaders were engaged in cultivating the art of flattery to keep their patrons in good humour and win favours. Nobody was inclined to convey the correct news to the rulers. Rulers had no time to listen to the hard intelligence. Balkh, now, had no space for an upright and truthful person like Bahauddin.

Adieu to the Birth Place

In these circumstances Bahauddin had no other option but to leave his birth-place. This was a very harsh and difficult decision for him. In 1213 A.D., he bid good bye to Balkh and departed with his family. Soon after Mongols attacked Balkh. As feared by Bahauddin, Khwarizm Shah could not repulse the Mongols. Mongols destroyed Balkh.

A poetic description of this incident is found in the Masnavi of Sultan Walad, the son and biographer of Jalaluddin Rumi.

Chun Ki Az Balkhiyaan Bahaae Walad
Gasht Dilkhastaa Aan Shaahe Sarmad

Naaghash Az Khuda Raseed Khitaab
Kaae Yagaana Shahanshahe Iqtaab
Chun Tu Raa Ein Girdaa Aazardand
Dil Chaak Tu Raa Za Jaa Bardand.
Badar Aa Az Miyaan Ein Aida
Taa Farsad Mashaan Azaab wa Balaa
Karad Az Balkh Azam Sue Hejaz
Za Aan Ki Shud Chaargar Daar Aan Raaz
Bood Dar Raftan wa Raseeda Khabar
Ki Az Aaan Raaz Shud Padeeda Asar.

Bahauddin, the lord of saints, was much hurt by the ill-treatment meted out to him by the people of Balkh.

He suddenly received a divine message to leave his enemies and quit Balkh so that God could punish those who had pained the heart of His devotee.

At this bidding he left for Hejaz. While he was in transit, news came that God's words had shown their effect (His wrath had visited the city of Balkh).

Young Jalaluddin also had to leave his birth-place alongwith his father. He was only five years old at this point of time. Migration to an unknown place –leaving behind the familiar surroundings, must have been a traumatic experience for the young child. The communication facilities were almost non existent then. Camels, ponies and donkies were the only means of transport. The roads were highly unsafe. The route between Balkh and Hejaz (modern Iraq) crossed through long stretches of an uninhabited desert. Highway banditry and brigandry were common place. Travelers formed convoys and traveled collectively. Young Jalaluddin had to face these odds.

Nishapur was the first place of halt. This city was also a famous centre of learning. The great Persian poet, Omar Khaiyyam, belonged to this city. In those day the famous *Sufi*

saint-poet, Fariduddin Attar, lived there. It is said that Attar was so impressed by the brilliance of young Jalaluddin that he gave him a copy of his book. Attar, a farsighted man, could assess that someday in future this young boy would expand and spread his message far and wide.

After a brief stay at Nishapur, Bahauddin reached Baghdad with his family. Here he was accorded a grand reception. The Caliph of Baghdad sent his representative to welcome him. He sent a gift of three thousand dinars and invited Bahauddin to his court.

Bahauddin politely declined the valuable gift. Since this money had been extorted from others by the Caliph, he could not accept it, he told the representative. He also turned down the invitation to court. 'If the Caliph was desirous of meeting him, he could come to the Jama Masjid next Friday', he told the envoy. He was scheduled to deliver the mid-day sermon.

On the appointed day at mid-day, the Caliph reached the mosque and listened to the sermon. Bahauddin coutioned the Caliph that he should change and orient his system of governance towards people's welfare and correct his life-style otherwise he would meet his doom at the hands of Mongols.

Bahauddin met Sheikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi, a *Sufi* Saint, at Baghdad. Subsequently, he left for Mecca. After the pilgrimage to Mecca he went to Syria. There he lived in the town of Arzinjan for a long spell. Its ruler Fakhruddin Bahram Shah was a patron of learned men. Scholar like Nizami Ganjawi adorned his court. He welcomed Bahauddin with open arms. From there Bahauddin went to Larinda.

These travels took thirteen years. In this period education of Jalaluddin was started. Under the supervision and guidance of his own father Jalaluddin began his studies. Bahauddin deputed his ablest and loyal disciple, Burhanuddin Mushaqqiq Tirmizi as his

son's tutor. Under his tutelage Jalaluddin was put through the traditional educational curriculum. According to the established convention, study of *Quran-Sharief*, the Holy Book of Muslims, was taken up first. After it, Jalaluddin studied Sunna and Hadith, the Islamic theological traditions. Then he took up other theological subjects like the Islamic laws related to conduct, charity, fasting, pilgrimage, offences against God, offences against society and the holy war against repression. He acquired extensive knowledge in all these subjects. Simultaneously, he also studied secular subjects like mathematics, logic, physics, philosophy, political science and ethics. He acquired mastery over Arabic and Persian languages also.

Jalaluddin was fortunate to have Burhanuddin Tirmizi, a learned, experienced and capable person as his tutor. He had studied Quran-Sharief in depth. His Persian commentary on the Holy Book, 'Maarif-e-Burhan Mushaqqiq,' had won great acclaim from scholars of theology. Even today it is considered to be an authoritative commentary on it. Jalaluddin has expressed his gratitude to this great teacher repeatedly in his works. Convinced of the efficacy of his teacher's instructional system, Jalaluddin entrusted the task of educating his son, Shah Walad, to Burhanuddin.

It is said that the brilliance of a person exhibits itself in his very early days. It happened so in the case of Jalaluddin. Evidence of his sharp mind and understanding is found in the accounts of his early life. The Persian accounts tell us that he was inclined towards spiritualism from his childhood days.

Once he was playing with other children on the rooftop of his house. Houses around were very close to each other. One could easily jump from one roof to the other. One boy dared Jalaluddin to jump from his house to the roof of the next house.

Jalaluddin calmly replied, "Jumping from one house to another is a trait of cats and dogs. If a man desires to jump then he should take a leap from earth to God."

The mind of Jalaluddin had been greatly influenced by his family's scholarly and spiritual environment. Saints and scholars from far and wide used to come to his father to consult him on theological issues.

Different aspects and issue of philosophy, ethics and religion were discussed and debated at length at his home. The environment of Jalaluddin's home was very similar to that of an Indian *Gurukul*. Naturally, it benefitted young Jalaluddin. He became well-versed in these subjects much before he achieved maturity in age.

Jalaluddin was eighteen years old when his family reached Larinda (Kerman). His father solemnized his marriage with Gauhar Khatoon, a daughter of Khwaja Lalai Samarqandi. Next year Jalaluddin was blessed with a son. He named him Shah Walad. In later years Shah Walad came to be called Sultan Walad also. Most of the accounts of Jalauddin Rumi's life come from his Masnavi 'Walad Nama.'

The eastern part of Turkey, then, was under the rule of the Seljuq Sultans. The then ruling Sultan Allauddin Kaikobad came to know about the scholarship and exemplary conduct of Bahauddin. He was a patron of scholars and men of talents. He was keen to have a scholar of such standing in his court. To accomplish this desire he invited Bahauddin to Konya, his capital city. On his invitation Bahauddin came to Konya in 1299 A.D. Jalaluddin was twenty two years old when his family made Konya their home.

Early Life

Jalaluddin lost his father just two years after settling down at Konya. His mother had died earlier.

The heavy responsibility of running his father's Madarasa (theological school) fell upon the shoulders of the twenty-four years old Jalaluddin. This had been willed by his father. Disciples of his father and Sultan Kaikobad also incited that he should be the head of the institution founded by his father. It was no child's play to discharge this heavy responsibility. Konya hosted a number of scholar in those days. Bahauddin was their leader and had been termed as the king of scholars by them. To carry on the legacy and to act as a replacement of such an illustrious father was not an easy matter.

However, soon Jalaluddin proved that he was equal to the task. In a short time he earned greater fame than his father.He earned great recognition for his erudition, exemplary moral conduct and sincerity.

Jalaluddin spent rest of his life at Konya. This city became the theatre of all his activities. He breathed his last here. Today his mausoleum stands at Konya.

Konya is an old and famous city. It is situated in the eastern part of the present day Turkey. It was the capital of the Eastern Holy Roman Empire. It was called Iconium in those days.

A legend is told about the founding of this city among the people of this region. As per this legend in the beginning of the creation two angels were flying from east to west in search of a peaceful resting place. When they approached this site, one asked the other "Kon-Ya?" (Do we sit down?).

They sat down and rested for a while here. They found the place peaceful and tranquil. It is said that this city was founded by these two angels.

The city prospered greatly and reached its peak of glory under the Seljuqs. After the historic battle of Manzikert, Seljuqs dominated Anatolia (modern Turkey) and its vicinity. Initially they

made Nicaea their capital. Repeated military campaigns mounted by European Christian kings forced them to abandon Nicaea and come to Konya. They found it most suitable from all angles of strategy—military, commercial and administrative. Konya became their second capital.

The Crusaders mounted many attacks on Konya also but were successfully repulsed by the Seljuqs. Seljuq Turks were educated and cultured. They patronized arts and learning. They had invited and settled a number of men of letters at Konya. Some of them had come from distant lands. At the time of Sultan Qiliz Arslan II many artists and scholars had settled at Konya. Fore-most among them was Nizami Ganjavi.

Sultan Allauddin Kaikobad, on whose invitation Jalauddin's family had come to Konya, had done the most to beautify this city. He had fortified the city by constructing a strong and impenetrable wall around it. One hundred and forty watch towers stood along the perimeter wall. There were twelve gates for ingress and egress. These were guarded round-the-clock. A moat surrounded the fort. These protective measures kept the invaders at bay. The citizens of Konya lived a secure life.

This was a difficult period for the central Asia. Mongol invasions had caused enormous damage and destruction in this area. Cities like Balkh, Bukhara, Samarkand, Nishapur and Herat, renowned for their material wealth and cultural heritage, were in ruin. Scholars, artists, and skilled artisans of these cities were looking around for patrons. Konya became their harbour. The magnanimity of Sultan Allauddin Kaikabad drew them to Konya like a magnet. Scholar like Maulana Sadruddin Konvi flocked to it.

The geographical location of Konya also contributed to its development specially in the fields of trade and commerce. The main east-west trade route passed through it. This made Konya

the central trade-mart. Its prosperity can be estimated from the fact that this city alone paid an annual revenue of thirty three lakh dinars to the royal treasury in the years of Sultan Allauddin Kaikobad's rule.

Peace, prosperity and patronage had made Konya the most important centre of civilization and culture in the contemporary Central Asia. These favourable circumstances made Jalaluddin to make Konya his home as well as the place of his activities. As Anatolia had been a part of the Eastern Holy Roman Empire, Arabs addressed it as 'Rum'. Since he became a resident of this area, Jalaluddin Walad Balkhi came to be known as Jalaluddin Rumi.

Arab and Persian historians, poets and literary critics refer to Rumi by many names. Khuda-bandgar, Maulana, Maulana-e-Rum, Maulana Jami and Mulla-e-Rum have been used by them frequently to refer to him. However, he is known world over today as Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi.

Rumi assumed the responsibility of carrying out the instructional work—his hereditary occupation, after his father's demise and carried it out very efficiently. Very soon he became renowned for his knowledge as well as proficiency in teaching. People came to him from all over to study under his guidance. Many came to get the finer points of theology and Islamic law explained to them.

Rumi was assisted greatly in this honorous task by his old teacher, Burhanuddin. It appears that both had got separated earlier and Burhauddin had gone away one year after the death of his revered teacher, Bahauddin. He was sorry to learn, on return that his teacher was no more.

Rumi welcomed his teacher respectfully and entrusted to him his son's education. He also sought the guidance of his teacher in the field of higher learning.

Burhanuddin found that Rumi had become fully proficient in the various branches of the conventional knowledge. He had surpassed his father in subjects like theology, ethics, logic, philosophy and literature. He did not require any further instruction in these subjects.

Now, Burhanuddin decided to initiate Rumi into spiritual experiences and provide him directions in this regard. Rumi accepted his teacher's guidance with full commitment. He took up the study of spiritual subjects with full dedication and concentration.

His son, Shah Walad, gives a vivid account of Rumi's activities in this period: "He became a sincere devotee of his teacher. He surrendered himself completely unto him. He prostrated before his teacher like a corpse. When he got up he gained a new and eternal life. He imbibed the pain that could scorn and mock at all the worldly pleasures."

Rumi illustrated by his example as to how a person could comply with the direction of Lord Krishna, given in *Shrimad Bhagwad Gita,*" *Sarva Dharmaan* Parityajya *Maamekam Sharnam Vraja* (Give up all paths and come unto me totally). For nine years he trained intensively under the watchful eyes of his teacher. At the end of it, Rumi felt as if he had become a replica of his teacher. There was no difference between him and Burhanuddin. Rumi, himself, describes this experience in these words:

Pukhtaa Garad Wa Az Taghire Door Shav,
Ru Chu Burhan Muhaqqiq Noor Shav.
Chun Za Khudrasti Hamaa Burhan Shudi,
Chun Ki Gufti bandaa Am Sultan Shudi,

Be mature and rise above all changes. Become a beacon of light like Burhan Muhaqqiq himself. When you shake off your 'self' you become Burhan, When you proclaim, "I am a slave," You become, in fact, a king.

Even this self realization could not quench the thirst for knowledge of Rumi. He left Konya and got himself admitted into *Madarsa–e–Haliviya* (School of Halab) at Halab to pursue higher learning. The accomplished scholar turned into an humble student.

Madarasa–e–Haliviya was a highly valued academy of the Hanafi school of Islam. A prosperous philanthropist had made the arrangement for distribution of sweets to all its inmates at sun-set for the whole duration of the month of Ramzaan, the month of fasting. For this he used to provide thirty thousand dinars every year. In Arabic sweets are called 'Halwa'. Since 'Halwa' was distributed at this academy, it came to be called *Madarasa-e-Haliviya.*

When Rumi joined it for higher studies, its principal was Kamaluddin, a famous theologian and poet of his time. He was very happy to have a bright and sincere student of Rumi's stature. Rumi studied theology, logic and law very diligently under him. He studied at this academy for about three years.

From there Rumi went to Damascus, another important metropolis of the Middle-East. It had escaped the wrath of Mongols and become a prominent centre for arts and culture. Scholars of various sects and schools had found refuge here. Rumi spent about four years in company of the learned men at Damascus. He liked it very much. He has praised this city highly many times in his writings. Impressed by the sophistication of the place and the erudition of its scholars he sent his son to Damascus to live and learn there later.

Syria, specially Damascus, had emerged as a centre of *Sufism. Sufi* saints, poets, thinkers and teachers of all traditions (*Silsila*) lived here. Rumi came in touch with these persons and imbibed their concepts. It had a profound impact upon his own

ideas. Some chroniclers are of the opinion that Rumi had met Shams Tabrezi at this juncture, whose revolutionary ideas had transformed Rumi's life. It is very likely that Rumi had a chance meeting with Shams at Damascus since Damascus was a favourite haunt of Shams. However, no influence of Shams can be seen on Rumi in this period. Therefore, most of the scholars dispute this view.

The ruling elite of Konya and the disciples of Rumi were perturbed over the long absence of Rumi. They beseeched him to return. Rumi acceded to their request and came back. He was accorded a grand welcome by the nobility as well as the common citizenry of Konya. It is said that Shamsuddin Isfahani, the minister of the Sultan, had offered his palace to Rumi. Rumi had politely declined the offer and repaired the Madarasa established by his father. Any other place, however grand, was not acceptable to him.

Rumi continued his studies and ascetic practices at Konya. He underwent a 120 days' spell of ascetic course of mortification of flesh at the advice of his teacher, Burhanuddin. The successful completion of this arduous course gave confidence to Rumi and satisfaction to his teacher. Now, Buhanuddin felt that the instruction of his pupil had come to the end. He could, now, guide others. Burhanuddin embraced his disciple and kissed his brow. His pupil had mastered not only the scriptures and laws but had also learnt to apply them in his life. He directed him to initiate others into spiritual learning and be their guide.

With his deep insight in the fields of mysticism and spiritualism, Rumi became an unparalleled teacher and a preacher. From the thirty-fourth year of his life he began his career of an independent preacher and teacher. Burhanuddin felt that his mission was over. He breathed his last with this great satisfaction.

Rumi's depth of knowledge and his clear and lucid way of explaining the complicated theological issues made him the most favoured teacher. Students and enquirers came to him from all places. There was an endless queue of these persons in front of his door. Shah Walad describes the scene in these words.

Dah Hazaarash Mureed Besh Boodand,
Garche Awwal Za Sidaq Door Boodand.
Waz Gofti Za Jood Bar Mimbar,
Garam Wa Gira Chu Waze Paighambar.

The number of his disciples was more than ten thousand; though all of them, primarily, did not appear to be sincere.

From the pulpit he addressed (the congregation) with great sincerity. The eloquence of his sermons was like that of the Prophet.

In this period Jalaluddin performed the roles of a teacher, preacher and a counsel very successfully. He taught the basic tenets of Islam, explained the related concepts and laws and resolved disputes over the related issues. Up till now, his poetic genius had remained unmanifested. He had not shown any interest in poetry so far. He lived the life of an ideal Sunni theologian. For three years this course of studying and teaching the traditional subjects continued without any interruption. However, soon his life was to undergo a profound change.

The Revolutionary Transformation

A revolutionary change took place in the thirty-seventh year of Rumi's life which transformed his thoughts as well as his life-style. The change was triggered by the incident of his meeting with Shams Tabrezi, which took place on 30th November, 1244 A.D.

Rumi, accompanied by his disciples, was moving through the bazaar of Konya. Suddenly a dervish (mendicant) stopped

him and flung a few questions at him. This dervish was very different from all other types of enquirers who used to approach Rumi to get their doubts resolved.

As mentioned earlier, some scholars hold the view that Rumi had met shams Tabrezi in his Syrian year. Even if it was so, it had no effect on Rumi. The encounter of the 30th November proved to the turning point in Rumi's life. A chronological examination of Rumi's life suggests that in all probability this was the first meeting between the two.

Shamsuddin Tabrezi was a mysterious person. His forefathers belonged to the cult of 'Assasins' founded by Hasan-Bin Sabbah. Loyalty to their leader was the supreme creed of its members. They considered it to be their foremost duty to liquidate the opponents and adversaries of their leader secretly. The English word 'Assasination' for targeted killing is derived from the name of the cult.

The founder of this cult had devised a new and ingenious method to recruit, initiate, motivate and train his followers for this heartless job. In a fortress, he had replicated 'Jannat' (paradise) as it is described in the scriptures. A garden had been laid through which a canal of clean and sweet water coursed. Trees of figs and vine-creepers yielded sweet fruits. Beautiful damsels and handsome young boys served as attendants and performed the role of the celestial houris. The targeted youth was drugged by Hasan's minions and brought to this surrogate paradise. On recovering his consciousness he felt as if he was in paradise. He was left to enjoy fully the pleasures of this paradise. After a few days he was drugged again and taken out.

This time, when he recovered his senses, he was confronted by the leader. The leader assigned him the task. He had to kill the person pointed out by the leader. He was assured that on success he would be entitled to the pleasures of paradise

perpetually. If he died on duty, he would achieve martyrdom. Refusal would ensue a tortuous and extremely painful death. The initiate, having sampled the pleasures of paradise, was generally eager to enjoy it again. He submitted to the will of the leader.

He was put through a rigorous training. He learnt various methods of assassination. In this trade an Arab Assasin was as proficient as the Japanese Ninja. The leader accepted the contracts for murder also. It was a good source of income for him.

Nooruddin Mohammed, the grandfather of Shams Tabrezi, was a prominent member of the cult. He became its leader after the death of its founder Hasan Subbah in 1166 A.D. He expired in 1210 A.D. His son, Jalauddin, abhorred the ghastly activities of this group. He disbanded the group and reverted to the traditional Islamic way of life. He and his followers, for this reason came to be called the 'Nau-Muslims' (new Muslims). Daulat Shah, a renowned Arab chronicler who was a contemporary of Jalaluddin, tells that Shams was the son of Jalauddin. Some historians disagree but this genealogy is accepted by most.

Meeting with Shams Tabrezi

Many stories are told about this historic meeting between Rumi and Tabrezi in the bazaar of Konya on 30th November.

Aflaki tells us that Shams had been initiated into mysticism by a saint of Tabriz, who used to make baskets to earn his livelihood. After being initiated into *Sufism,* Shams wandered around in search of spiritual guides. Whenever he came to learn about a mystic or an accomplished person, he rushed to the man. Due to this nature he had earned the nick-name '*Parinda*' (Bird). He had undergone a long spell of intensive learning in spiritualism. He had traveled extensively with other mystics and discussed various aspects of *Sufism* with them. He had

meditated for long upon the nature of the Divine and man's relationship with Him. All these efforts helped him to achieve self-realization. Now, he was in search of a person with whom he could share his experiences. When he came to know about Rumi, he felt that his search for a sympathetic companion, with whom he could share his findings, had come to an end.

Shams came to Konya and stayed in an inn. He pretended to be a rich trader. He told the inn-keeper that he had come to Konya for business. The truth was that his only possessions at that time were a tattered mattress and an old water pot. He did not have sufficient money even to purchase the two square meals. It is said that he fasted for a number of days to save money for a meal.

On the fateful day, he was sitting at the gate of the inn when Jalaluddin happened to pass in front of him. Jalaluddin was riding a mule. His disciples and citizens of Konya were around him. Suddenly Shams got up and stopped him by seizing the bridle of his mule. The procession of disciples and other accompanying Jalaluddin also came to a halt.

"O Trader of coins (beliefs) and chanter of Lord's names! Tell me who is the greatest servant of God? Mohammad or Bayazid of Bistam?" Shams challenged him tauntingly.

"Mohammad, of course," Rumi replied "He is the greatest servant of God; incomparable among all teachers and saints."

"Then", rejoined Shams, "how is it that Mohammad says, 'We have' not known Thee O God, as Thou rightly should be known whereas Bayazid says. Glory unto me! How very great is my glory!"

These words of Shams struck Rumi like a thunderbolt. He became blissfully unconscious and fell from his mule. On

regaining consciousness he took Shams to his home. Both were closeted for forty days discussing their experiences and ideas.

Jami provides a modified version of Aflaki's story. According to him Rumi had given befitting replies to all questions of Shams. Subsequently they continued their inter-action for three months.

Muhiyiddin Abdul Qadir, in his book, Al Kawakib Al-Muziyyah gives a completely different account of this meeting.

According to him their meeting had not taken place in the bazaar. It had taken place at the Madarasa of Rumi.

Rumi was, as per his routine, imparting instruction to his disciples. A number of books had been kept in a pile in front of him. An unknown person came into the hall uninvited and unannounced and took his seat in a corner.

After sometime the visitor, pointing at the stack of books, asked Rumi, "What is this?"

Rumi did not relish this uncalled interruption. The visitor's conduct appeared to be highly objectionable to him. He was annoyed and surprised at the temerity of the visitor. However, holding back his temper, he gave a dismissive answer, "This is beyond your comprehension."

As soon as Rumi uttered these words, the pile of book caught fire. Every body was startled. Rumi was shocked.

"What is this?" He cried out.

"This is beyond your comprehension," the stranger, who was none other than Shams, shot back Rumi's own words in reply.

Having said so, the stranger departed. Rumi had been much impressed by this miraculous display of the stranger's power. He

stopped teaching and went in search of the stranger. He could locate him after some efforts. He persuaded him to live at his home. Both, now, devoted their time in sharing their spiritual experiences.

Amin Ahmad Razi and others provide yet another version of this incident. According to them, Rumi's rude reply had prompted the stranger to throw the books into the water tank built for the devotee's ablutions. When Rumi expressed regrets and rued over the loss of his books, the stranger pulled them out from the tank. All were surprised to see that no damage had been caused by water to these hand-written books. The books had retained their pristine condition.

Daulat Shah gives another version of the incident. He tells that Shams was in search of a person who could understand and appreciate his unorthodox views, who could empathies with him; before whom he could bare his heart unreservedly. His mentor, Ruknuddin Sanjabi, advised him to go to Konya. His search would end there, he assured Shams. Shams came to Konya and stayed at the inn, which was generally patronized by Sugar-merchants.

One day, when Rumi, accompanied by his students and admirers, was passing by this inn, Shams stopped him and put the question to him, "what is the goal of knowledge and learning?"

Confidentlly Rumi replied, 'To follow and reach the Prophet."

Shams commented, "This is a superficial reply."

"Then you tell me, what is the goal of knowledge?" Rumi retorted.

"The mission of knowledge, wisdom and learning is to reach its source," Shams answered and recited a couplet of Sanai in support of his statement.

Ilm Kaz Tu Turaa Nai Bastaa nad,
Jahal Za Aan Ilm Bih Bood Bisyaar.

If wisdom does not take you to its source, then, ignorance is better than that (sham) knowledge.

In other words, if learning does not make one realize that the 'self' is something different and distinct from the physical elements (body), then it is worthless.

Rumi got so impressed by this reply of Shams that he decided then and there to become a disciple of Shams.

Ibn Batuta, the famous traveler, gives a completely different story in his travelogue. Rumi had been dead for a hundred years when Ibn Batuta visited Konya.

He mentions in his accounts that a mausoleum had been built for Rumi, which he had visited.

According to Ibn Batuta, a sweet vendor had visited the hall where Rumi was teaching his students. He sold one piece of sweet for a pice. Rumi asked him for a sweet. The vendor gave him a piece but refused to accept the payment. He declined to serve others and left the hall hurriedly. Rumi ate the sweet. He looked around for the vendor. When he did not see him he went out in search for him. He searched him for days but in vain. Poems issued forth from his lips incessantly in this period of search. His disciples wrote them down. The collection of these poems came to be known as the Masnavi.

Ibn Batuta's story appears neither natural nor authentic. A hundred years had elapsed between Rumi's death and his visit. As it often happens in case of celebrities, a number of legends and tales had come into circulation with regard to Rumi and Shams in this long interval. Admirers as well as detractors had coined all sorts of fancy tales about them.

However, all these stories bring out one fact clearly in the open that till they met, Rumi was neither aware of Shams' arrival at Konya nor about his erudition.

Another undisputed fact is that their chance meeting resulted in a revolutionary change in Rumi's life-style. The saying of Rumi:

Manam Aan Na Gahaan Tu Raa Deed,
Gashtaa Sar Taa Wa Paa Hamaa Deed.

After seeing you, I do not seek any other person; I see myself from toes to top (in you); indicates how profoundly he was influenced by Shams.

It is very difficult to make an intelligent guess about the questions put to Rumi by Shams or the reply given by Rumi to Shams. The questions given in the stories are so common place that it is difficult to believe that a learned and eminent theologian like Rumi could not provide the proper answers to them. Certainly, these questions could not dumb Rumi.

It appears logical to surmise that some serious deliberations about mysteries related to the Divine and creation had take place between them. The brilliance of Shams' genius must have dazzled and overwhelmed the mind of Jalaluddin, who was an eager seeker of truth.

Surprisingly, Rumi's son Shah Walad does not provide any account of this meeting in his Masnavi. However, he does dwell upon at length about the close relationship that the two had. From these descriptions one can infer about what might have been discussed.

He says that Rumi had mastered all the subjects that were in vogue those days. Some of his students had surpassed even Bayazid in scholarship, yet, Rumi was not a satisfied soul. He

was always on the look out for an *Abdal*, a guide who could remove the veil of ignorance and reveal the face of Truth.

This quest of Rumi, described by Shah Walad, would remind an Indian reader of a verse of *Ishopanishad* in which the *Rishi* (Sage) prays,

Hiranyamayena Paatrena Satyasyaapihitam Mukham,
Tat Tvam Pushan Apaavrinu Satya Dharmaay Drishtaye.

The face of the truth has been covered by a vessel of gold. O Lord! Remove this cover and show me the truth.

Walad, further, states, "uptill now no one had realized the true worth of Shams.

"Shams was one of those rare persons who had been able to merge their identity completely into that of the Supreme Divine Element. Such people live in this world like the soul in the body. As the soul, inspite of being present in the body, remains invisible, so, saints like Shams' remain unnoticed by the society. Shams had not been correctly estimated by his contemporary scholars. God had chosen to keep Shams beyond the circle of people's recognition. Pleased by the devotion and submission of Jalaluddin Rumi, God had shown His kindness by revealing the true identity of Shams to him.

"Interaction with Shams removed all the doubts from Rumi's heart. He got answers for those questions which had been tormenting him for long. Now he could solve the puzzle which had baffled him for years. He freed himself from all worldly bonds. He could perceive what others could not and could hear what others did not. He discarded his duality and became one with Shams. Rumi and Shams, though having separate bodies, became one in spirit. Logic and reasoning became irrelevant. Rumi took Shams to his home and humbly submitted, "Kindly accept the request of this dervish. Though my home is not a

suitable abode for you, please stay and oblige. I am your humble slave. I place at your disposal whatever I possess today and pledge whatever I may come to possess in future."

From the above account of Shah Walad it is seen that both, Rumi and Shams, found in each other the friend, philosopher and guide that they had been searching for so far. Their meeting was like a shower of rain upon parched land.

This was an unprecedented incident in the history of spiritualism. Many saints and spiritual practitioners did come across their mentor and guide suddenly but this is the solitary example of two accomplished spiritualists bonding totally at the very first meeting. This meeting started the new phase in Rumi's life which made him immortal.

Now, Rumi and Shams started living together. Rumi gave up teaching and meeting visitors. He had no time for others. He also gave up the daily prayers and other traditional religious observances. Rumi discarded all those religious rites and rituals which he used to recommend to his students earlier. These conventional rites and customs appeared meaningless and irrelevant to him now. He preferred to be in company of Shams only. Earlier, like other preachers, Rumi had also believed that music and dance were undesirable. Now, under the influence of Shams, he became a great votary of music and dance.

For hours he listened to music and, occasionally, danced with Shams in ecstasy. Shams was a strict disciplinarian. He instructed Rumi to have no truck with others. He forbade Rumi from even engaging in conversation with others. Rumi obeyed him fully and devoted himself to the service of Shams round-the-clock. Shams became his sole object of love and worship. Punning on the word 'Shams' (Sun), Rumi says:

Chun Hadeese Ru-e-Shams-Al-deen Raseed
Shamse Chaaram Aasmaan Sar Dar Kasheed.

When the Shams (Sun) of the fourth sky came to learn of the arrive of Shams of Faith (Shams Tabrezi), he pulled down his head. In other words, even sun lost its brilliance before Shams.

This change in Rumi's conduct was not appreciated by his disciples and followers. It had deprived them of the benefit of their teacher's instruction and guidance. On the other hand it had given rise to all kinds of vilifying rumours about the relationship between Rumi and Shams, in the town. They were shocked to see their pious teacher neglecting the daily religious rituals. They held Shams to be responsible for these untoward developments. Rumi was aware of his students' resentment. Referring to their mentality and ill-feeling towards Shams, he says, "I ceased to have all interaction with my fellows. My words were the food for my disciples; my thoughts were nectar-drops for my pupils. They hungered and thirsted. Thence ill-feelings were engendered among them and blight fell upon my teacher."

Disciples of Rumi, who were in thousands, started conspiring to find ways and means to expel Shams from Konya. Shams was unnerved by this environment of intense jealously and animosity. He decided to leave Konya on his own. When Rumi came to know of it, he was shocked. He prayed to Shams to stay put in the most earnest words. Shams had become the centre of his life. He could not think of a life without Shams. He depicts his agony most vividly in a poem:

Ba Shuneeda Am Ki Azme Safar Meekuni, Makun;
Mehar Harif-o-Yaar Deegar Meekuni, Makun,
Tu Da Jahan Gharibi-o-Ghurbat Na Deeda
Qasd Kudaam Khastaa Jigar Meekuni, Makun,
Ai Maah Ki Charkh Zer-o-Zabr Az Baraye Tast,

Maa Raa Kharaab Wa Zer-o-Zabr Meekuni, Makun.
Ko Ahad Wa Ko Waseeqa Ki Baa Maa Kardeyee,
Az Qoul-o-Ahad Khaweesh Abr Meekuni, Makun,
Che Waydaa Midehi Wa Che Saugand Mikhuri,
Saungand-o-Ashoh Raa Che Sipar Meekuni, Makun,
Ai Bartar Az Wajood-o-Adam Paigaah Tu,
Ein Lahzaa Az Wajood Guzar Meekuni, Makun.
Ai Dozakh-o-Bihisht Ghulaamaaane Amr Tu
Bar Maa Bihisht Ham Chu Saqar Meekuni, Makun.
Andar Shakarstaane Tu Az Zahar Eemnam,
Aan Zahar Raa Harife Shakar Meekuni, Makun.
Jaanam Chu Ko Rahe Par Aanash Bast Nakarad,
Rue Man Az Firaaq Chu Zar Meekuni, Makun,
Chun Rue Dar Kashi Tu Shawad Mah Za Gham Siyah,
Qard Kasoof Qarse Qamar Meekuni, Makun,
Maa Khushk Lab Shaweem Chu Tu Khushk-Aawari,
Chashm Maraa Baashak Che Tu Meekuni, makun.
Chashm Haraamkhor-e-Man Duzd-e-Husn Tast
Ai Jaan Sazaae Duzd Basar, Meekuni, Makun.

I have heard that you have decided to travel;
Please do not do so;
That you give your love to a new friend and companion,
Please do not do so;
You may be a stranger in this world, but you have never
seen estrangement;
Why are you attempting to break heart,
Please do not do so.
O moon! For whose sake the sky is moving up and down
Similarly you shake me;
Where is the promise and the pledge that you had made to me,
Please do not do so
You depart from your word and promise;
Please do not do so,

Why give promise? Why give assurances?
Why make a shield of vows and false promises;
Please do not do so,
Your sphere is above existence and non-existence,
You desire to pass away from existence;
Please do not do so,
Your orders are obeyed by hell and heaven,
You are making heaven like the fire of hell for me;
Please do not do so,
In your sugar-cane field, I am safe from poison,
You mingle poison with sugar;
Please do not do so,
My soul is full of fire, yet it was not enough for you,
By your absence you are making my face as pale as gold;
Please do not do so,
When you hide your face, the moon darkens with grief,
You are intending to eclipse the moon;
Please do not do so,
Our lips get dry when you show dryness,
Why you are making my eyes wet with tears;
Please do not do so,
My freebooter eye is a thief of your beauty,
O Beloved! Why do you punish this thief?
Please do not do so,

These verses indicate that the impending separation had raised a storm in the heart of Rumi. Shams had become the source of sustenance to Rumi.

Such intensity of love has only a few parallels. The love of *Gopikas* of *Braj* for Krishna- as depicted in *Shrimad Bhagwad*, appears to be a comparable example. These women of *Braj* also- like Rumi, had discarded all rule and norms for the sake of love for their beloved. They could not think of living without Krishna. Likewise, Rumi could not think of living without Shams.

The Separation

The attitude of Rumi's disciples became so hostile and hateful that Shams found it intolerable. In spite of the entreaties of Rumi, he decided to leave. He left Konya for Syria. He had come to Konya on 29th November 1244 A.D. and left it on 29th June, 1246 A.D. Rumi had his company only for eighteen months. In this short spell Shams had been able to transform an orthodox theologian into an intense and irreverent lover.

Without Shams Rumi was like a fish out of water. Shams had left abruptly. He had not left any forwarding address. Rumi was keen on locating him in order to be in touch with him. After sometime a letter arrived from Damascus. In reply Rumi dispatched many letters, full of emotional outpouring, but to no avail. Neither a reply came nor any acknowledgement. Rumi became disturbed and desolate. He grew restless and began neglecting his food and other necessities.

Now, it was the turn of his disciples to get worried. They repented their past behaviour. They beseeched Rumi for forgiveness. They assured him that they would not oppose Shams' return if he chose to come back. They would not be hostile towards him. In the words or Shal Walad, they pleaded,"

Taubaa Haa Mee Kuneem, Rehmat Kun,
Ghar Deegar Ein Kuneem, Laanat Kun.
Taubaae Maa Bakun Wa Lutfe-Qabool,
Ghar Che Kardeem Zurm Haz-Fazool.

We repent sincerely, Show compassion, If we repeat the past folly, do curse us. We admit that we committed a great Sin. in fun, Do extend to us your forgiveness.

Perturbed by his father's agony and prompted by the circle of repentant followers of Rumi, Shah Walad decided to trace out

Shams and persuade him to come back. Rumi exhorted him to get Shams back at any cost. To accomplish this task he could use any ruse or subterfuge. 'Don't he misled by the sweet talk or assurances of Shams', Rumi cautioned his son, 'Don't rely on his promise to come later. You should escort him yourself.' Rumi instructed:

Ba Raveed Ai Harifaan,
Ba Kasheed Yaar-i-Maa Raa;
Ba Man Aswaareed Haalaa
Sanam-i-Gurej Paaraa.
Agar U Waaydaa Goyad,
Ki Hame Deegar Biyaayad,
Maa Khureed Makare U
Raa Ba Farebad U Shumaa Raa.

Go, my friends and bring me that friend by persuasion;
bring that elusive beloved of mine.
If he holds out a promise that he would come at another time,
be not deluded or deceived.

He advised again:

Ba Bahaana Haae Sheerin
Ba Taraana Haae Mauzoon.
Ba Kasheed Kooe Khaanaa Maa
Khoob Khushlaqaa Raa.

Bring that resplendent beauty to my (Dark) house with sweet talk and on any pretext.

Like any other separated lover, Rumi also shuddered at the thought that Shams might refuse to come back. He believed that by Divine Grace he had obtained Shams' company. He did not want to lose him again and was prepared to pay any price to get him back. His heart was like a swing, moving from hope to

despair. His emotional state can be gauged by a ghazal that he had composed at this juncture.

Bageer Daamne Luftash Ki Naaghaan Bagurezad,
Wale Ma Kash Tu Chu Teerash Ki Az Kamaan Bagurezad,

Che Naqshhaa Ki Bayaazad Wa Che Heelhaa Ki Ba Saazad
Ba Naqsh Haazir Baashad Za Raahe Jaan Bagurezad.

Dar Asmaanash Ba Joe Chu Mah Dar Aab Ba Taabad,
Dar Aab Chunki Da Aae Ba Aasman Bagurezad.

Za haa Mahaanash Ba Joe Nishaan Dahad Ba Makaanat.
Chu Dar Makaanash Ba Joe Ba Laa Makaan Bagurezad.

Chu Teer Mee Barwad Az Kamaan Chu Murgh Gumaanat
Yaqeen Ba Daan Ki Yaqeen Waar Az Gumaa Bagurezad.

Az Ein-wa-Aan Bagurezam Za Taras Nai Za Malooli
Ki Aan Nighaare Lati fam Za Ein-o-Aan Bagurezad.

Gurez-Paae Chu Baadam Za Ishq-e-Gul Chu Sabaa Am,
Gulee Za Beem Khizaani Za Bostaan Bagurezad.

Chunaam Gurezad Az Tu Ki Gar Nawisi Naqshash
Za Lohe-Naqsh Ba Parde U Za Za Dile Nishaan Bagurezad.

Hold on to his garment of favours,
He will flee all of a sudden.

Do not draw him (Forcefully) like an arrow
He will flee from the bow.

What deceptive forms does he take!
What tricks does he employ!
If he is present physically;
He will flee by the way of spirit.

(When you) seek him in the sky,
Like the moon he shines in water;
When you come to the water, he will flee to the sky.

Seek him in the placeless,
He will beckon you from a place;
When you seek him in that place, he will flee to the placeless.

As an arrow speeds from the bow,
Like the bird of your imagination,
Believe that he the base of my faith;
Would flee from even the imagination.

He would flee here and there,
Not out of weariness but for fear
My gracious beauty will flee from this and that.

(He Believes that) I am as fleet footed as the wind,
(Arising) From the love of rose, I am like the Zephpyr.

(That) Rose, in dread of autumn, will flee from the garden.
He will flee from you; even if you make a picture of his
The picture will fly from the tablet,
His impression will fly from the heart.

Shams Returns

Shah Walad was successful in his mission. He could not only locate Shams but could successfully pursuade him to accompany him back to Konya. He fully abided by his father's directions and never let Shams out of his sight throughout the journey. He seated Shams on his mount and walked by its side.

Covering the long journey in this way he reached Konya alongwith Shams in 1247 A.D. Rumi was once again united with his dearest friend. Now Rumi fully converted to Shams' ways. He cast off the mantle of the theologian and preacher and put on the tunic of a Dervish (ascetic). He gave up the daily rituals completely. Rumi declared that he had imbibed the essence of the Holy book and had no use of the dry parts-

Man Maghje Quran Raa Bardushtan

The old story got repeated again. His family members and followers could not adapt themselves to this drastic change. They felt that Shams' influence would ultimately make their leader and mentor mad.

Assassination of Shams

Rumi openly proclaimed that Shams was his preceptor, his guide and the object of his veneration –

Peer-i-man Wa Mureed-i-Man;
Dard-i-Man Wa Dawaa-i-Man;
Faash Ba Goftam Ein Sukhan,
Shams-i-ManKhuda-i-Man.

His disciples felt that unless this trend was arrested they would face serious consequences. The reputation of their teacher would get tarnished. His influence over the community would dwindle. When their teacher would become a *persona-non-grata*, what value would the students have in the society, they pondered. They were afraid that they would be left high and dry.

They forgot the promise that they had made to their teacher. They hatched a conspiracy to get rid of Shams. This time it was not to be expulsion but murder. It is said that this action-plan had the tacit approval of Allauddin Muhammad, a son of Rumi. This view is supported by the fact that Rumi had refused to accompany the funeral procession of this son of his, who had pre-deceased him. He had come to know of his complicity in this heinous crime in the later years. It had embittered and saddened his heart.

According to Aflaki, the historian, on the fateful day, while Rumi and Shams were closeted and engaged in deep conversation, the conspirators drew out Shams on some pretext and stabbed him. Seven persons took part in this crime. After killing, they

took Shams' dead body to a deserted place and buried it near a dry well.

Jami tells this story in a slightly different way. He agrees with Aflaki as far as the first part is concerned. He gives a different account of the later part. As per his narration the conspirators were not able to kill Shams. As soon as the killer took out his dagger to plunge into his heart, Shams raised a slogan loudly. This made all conspirators unconscious. When they recovered their senses, they found that Shams was nowhere. There was no trace of him. Only some blood-stains remained on the spot.

Masnavi of Shah Walad is silent on this point. It only tells that once again Shams had disappeared from Konya. The murder or the attempt are not mentioned.

Whatever might be the truth, the fact was that Rumi had lost his closest friend once again. He was deeply distressed. People tried to convince him that his friend was no more. They wanted him to get over the grief. However, they failed in their efforts.

For Rumi, Shams was not a mere mortal creature. To him there was no distinction between Shams and the Absolute. He contradicted the statements about the death of Shams most vehemently and asserted that Shams was beyond death. He would say, "Who says that this immortal person has died? Who says that the sun (Shams) of hope has set? Look, an enemy of the sun, closing both his eyes, proclaims from the roof-top that the sun has set:

Ke Goft Ki Aan Zinda-I-Jaaved ba Marad,
Ke Goft Ki Aaftab-i-Ummeed Ba Marad.
Az Dushman-i-Khursheed Bar Aamad Bar Baam,
Do Chashm Ba Bast Wa Goft Khursheed Ba Marad.

Rumi never gave up the hope of being re-united with Shams. He questioned travelers coming to Konya from different places about Shams. Many, just to humour him, told him imaginary tales. Even these made-up stories gladdened Rumi's heart. According to a legend a traveler told Rumi that he had come across Shams at Damascus. Rumi became so happy to hear this news that he took off his cloak and gave it in reward to the news-bearer. A well-wisher, subsequently, voiced his suspicion about the veracity of this information. "The traveler had not told the truth; Rumi should not have believed him," he confided.

"Do you think that I can not discriminate between truth and falsehood?" Rumi retorted. Had I believed that he was telling the truth, I would have gifted my life to him, not just a robe."

Now, Rumi turned to music to console his bereaved soul.

Solace from Music and Dance

Bereft of the company of his friend, Rumi immersed himself fully into the flow of music. It elevated him to ecstasy. He would get engrossed in music and start dancing. His condition was akin to that of Meera Bai or Mahaprabhu Chaitanya Dev. He had no care for the world or concern for the conduct rules.

The contemporary scholars, preachers and their followers were aghast to see the wayward behaviour of one of their colleagues. They tried hard to persuade him to revert back to the traditional pattern of life generally followed by men of his profession. Rumi, however, was now beyond these considerations. He wanted to live like a free bird; to chalk out his own flight-path in an open sky. He would dance and piroutte to the tune of music for hours totally enraptured by the magic of the notes. Shah Walad describes the state of Rumi in these words.

Roz-o-Shab Dar Samaa Raqsaan Shud,
Bar Zameen Hamchu Charkh Girdaan Shud.
Baange-Afghane U Ba Arsh Raseed,
Naalaae Ash Raa Buzurg–o Khurd Shuneed.
Seem-o-Zar Raa Ba Matarbaan Meedaad,
Har Che Boodash Ba-Khaadimaan Meedad.
yak Zamaan Be Samaa Wa Raqs Nabood,
Roz-o-Shab Lahzae Nami Aasood.
Ghalghalaae U Fataad Andar Shahar,
Shahar Che Balki Dar Zamaanaa-Wa-Dahar.
Ka Ein Chuneen Qutub-o-Muftee-i-Islam,
Kost Andar Do Kon Sheikh-o- Imaam.
Shorhaa Mee Kunad Chu Shaidaa-i-oo,
Gaah Pinhaan-Wa-Ghaahe Huwaidaa-i-oo.
Khalq Az Wai Za Sharah-Wa-Deen Gashtand.
Hamaagaane Ishq Raa Rahe Ein Gashtand.
Haafizaane Jumlaa Sherkhwan Shuda And,
Ba Sooe Matarbaan Rawaan Shuda And.

Day and night he danced in ecstasy,
He revolved like the heaven on earth.

His cries reached the peak of the skies,
And were heard by all and sundry.

Silver and gold, he showered on the musician,
Whatever he possessed, he gave to the servants.

Not a moment did he spend without music and ecstasy,
Never was he at rest even for a moment.

A furor arose inside the city.
In fact, the whole world rose up in an uproar.

Such a scholar and learned man of Islam,
The accepted guide and leader in the two worlds.

Should act like a raving madman,
In private as well as public.

The people abandoned faith and religion,
And went crazy after love.

The reciter of holy verses now recited verses of love,
And kept company of musicians.

The old saying that the first poet must have been a separated lover, who, to express his pain, used the form of poetry proved fully true in the case of Rumi. Separation from Shams released a torrential flow of poetry from the tormented heart of Rumi. He composed more than thirty thousand verses and quatrains in this period. The collection of these poems is called Diwan-i-Shams or 'Shams-Nama'. Rumi had taken on the persona of Shams and used his name to denote the authorship of many poems of this collection. Its nomenclature created an impression in the mind of some readers that this work actually belonged to Shams. In fact, this work was a tribute to Shams by Rumi.

Now, all by himself, Rumi took to wandering in the streets of Konya like a lost soul. Music was his only solace and refuge. Fortunately, this muse could save him from madness. In fact music, once again, gave a new turn to his life.

Meeting with Zarkobi

This turn came in Rumi's life in 1250 A.D. Rumi, in an ecstatic mood, was wandering in the streets of Konya. Suddenly, he heard the regular beat of '*thak-thak*' coming out of a shop.

He was in the goldsmiths' quarters. A goldsmith was busy hammering a piece of gold into the gold-leaf. To do so he was hitting it with a hammer incessantly.

The beat of the hammer provided a frame to Rumi's meandering musical tunes. Till now, his emotions were unbound

and unregulated–did not follow any regular course. The hammer beats gave his emotional flow a definite course, a time–frame.

Rumi stood still and listened intently to the '*thak-thak*' of the hammer. The goldsmith noticed him. He was extremely happy to see this learned saint standing in front of his shop and listening so attentively to his hammer's beat. Not to break his concentration he kept on hammering. The gold-piece got reduced to powder. It spilled over the anvil and fell around. The hammering, however, continued unabated.

The goldsmith lost his gold but gained something which was far more precious than gold or pearls or diamonds. He earned the friendship, love and company of Rumi. This goldsmith, Salahuddin Zarkobi, became the new friend, companion and confidante of Rumi.

Rumi describes the feeling that he experienced when he heard the *thak-thak* of the hammer in these words:

Yaki Ganji Padeed Aamad Ein Dookaane Zarkobi,
Zahe Soorat, Zahe Maani, Zahekhoobi, Zahekhoobi.

I discovered a treasure in this goldsmith's shop,
what a form, what content, what grace, what beauty!

For next nine years Zarkobi was the constant companion of Rumi. Rumi was very apprehensive about the safety and well-being of his new friend. He did not want Zarkobi of suffer the fate of Shams. To give a formal shape to their relationship he got one of his sons married to the daughter of Salahuddin Zarkobi.

The personalities of Shams and Salahuddin were poles apart. Unlike Shams, Salahuddin was neither a Dervish (Mendicant) nor a musician. He was a simple householders devoted to his family. Shah Walad gives us a pen-picture of Salahuddin:

Aam-e-Mahaz Wa Saadaa Wa Naadan,
Peshe-oo-Neko-bad Badeh Yaksaan.
Na Tawaanad Durust Faateha Khwaanad,
Gar Ganad Zo Kase Sawaali Maanad.

He was like a common man, plain and simple. Had someone asked him to recite the prayer (Fateha), probably he would not have been able to render it properly.

Rumi's devotion to such an uneducated person baffled people. Rumi held Zarkobi in great reverence. To him this simple person was like a divine figure:

Roz-o-Shab Mee Kuneed Sajood oo Raa,
Bar Fazoonaane-Deen Fazood oo Raa.

Day and night he prostrated himself before him. He exalted him to a higher pedestal even than that of the wisemen of the faith.

For a realized–soul like Rumi, this was nothing unusual. Worldly attainments or distinction meant nothing to him. He was attracted by the purity of a person's inner personality only. Others did not value simplicity, humility and sincerety but these qualities were like the most valuable gems to Rumi. Rumi says, "We do not see the outer form or the outer conduct or the speech; we see only what is contained within and the sensitivities of a man:

Maa Barun Raa Na Nigreem Wa Qaal Raa,
Maa Darun Raa Nigreem wa Haal Raa.

The simple and disciplined life-style of Salahuddin provided stability to Rumi's life. For this, Rumi felt greatly indebted to him.

Though Zarkobi was a simple trader but he could make a good assessment of situations. He had given a very correct

assessment of his own relationship with Rumi to Shah Walad. Shab Walad speaks about it in his Masnavi:

Mee Bar Na Janad Az Ein Ki Maulana,
Karad Makhsoosam Az Hamaa Tanhaa.
Khud Na Daanishtaa Ein Ki Aainaa Am,
Dar Man Oo Rue Khaveesh Mee Beenad.
Khavishtan Raa Che Goona Na Guzinad.

People are unhappy over the fact that the Maulana holds me only as his special friend.

They do not understand that I am only a mirror. I can not see my own face.

He views his own form in my face.
Is there any reason why he should not look at his own face (in a mirror)?

Though Zarkobi's company had comforted Rumi but he had not been able to get over the loss of Shams. He nursed the hope of being united with him again. He went to Damascus to look for Shams. He searched for him everywhere. Not a street or a part of the city was spared. He asked all and sundry whether anyone had seen Shams. Could someone lead him to Shams?

People were amazed. The most renowned theologian of his times was searching for a wanderer, who had no fixed address, like a madcap.All shook their head in denial. Everyone's stock answer was, "we do not know." Desperation drove Rumi to appeal to Shams himself. He cried out:

How long do I look for you?
I have been house-to-house and door-to-door.

How long would you avoid me?
From corner to corner, from street to street.

Chand Kunam Tu Raa Talab,
Khaanaa-Ba-Khaanaa, Dar-Ba-Dar.
Chand Gurezi Az Baram,
Goshaa-Ba-Goshaa, Koo-Ba-Koo.

Rumi could not find Shams. However, his search was not in vain. This search resulted in the self-realisation. Rumi found that Shams was enshrined within his own heart. He was unnecessarily looking for him in the outside world. He could find within his own self the form, the beauty, the glory and the love of his beloved.

Like the Indian poet-saint Kabir, now Rumi also discovered that as fragrance is present in the flower itself, the beloved dwells in the heart of the lover.

Rumi, speaking of this discovery, says' "Though I glorified his beauty, (in truth) I was the repository of all that beauty and grace."

The sugar-cane juice (the human soul) does not boil for other's sake. It aims to perfect its own beauty (by becoming the sugar-crystal).

Wasf Husnash Ki Mee Fazoodam Man,
Jood Hamaan Husn-o-Lutf Boodam Man.
Sheera Az Bahar Kas Na Mee Joshad,
Dar Pae Husne Khaveesh Mee Koshad.

The New Phase of Spiritualism based on Love

With this new realization Rumi returned to Konya. Now, he was at peace with himself as well as others. The cobwebs of doubts had been swept away by this new-found wisdom. Now, he began composing his immortal epic, 'Masnavi'. It began in 1261 A.D. and continued upto 1273 A.D.—when Rumi breathed his last.

In due course his followers and the inhabitants of Konya came under his spell. They accepted the new revolutionary gospel of love propounded by Rumi. They conceded that the search for the Divine based on selfless love and devotion was better than adherence to the orthodox, narrow, rigid and sectarian approach. His disciples also had a change in their attitude. The gave up their antipathy and the critial stance. They embraced the new devotional path of their teacher whole-heartedly. Hisamuddin Chalebi was the foremost among them. After Zarkob's death he became the closest person to Rumi.

Rumi saw in Hisamuddin aspects of Shams and Salahuddin, both. In other words, in the pure and selfless heart of Chalebi Rumi found a new mirror.

Hisamuddin requested Rumi to express his thoughts and ideas in simple language so that common people could comprehend them. His prayer was granted. Towards this end Rumi embarked upon the great task of composing the Masnavi. He did not have to make much of an effort. His heart was so engrossed in thoughts and sentiments that verses spouted out of his mouth effortlessly. While roaming in the streets of Konya or conversing with his disciples in a public bath or garden, Rumi would recite innumerable verses, couplets, proverbs, and poems and tell stories, parables and anecdotes to illustrate his subtle philosophical concepts. He took care that all these were in a very simple language. Like Gautama Buddha he spoke in people's tongue so that all could understand his message.

Hisamuddin followed him everywhere like his shadow and wrote down whatever came out of his master's lips. The outpourings of Rumi finally took the shape of 'Masnavi-o-Maanavi'. This was the fruit of Hisamuddin's hard labour and a gift of his to the mankind.

Rumi was well aware of the hard work done by his devoted disciple. He used to call Hisamuddin 'Diya-ul-Haq' (the light of truth). 'Diya' stands for light as well as the sun-light in Arabic.

Soon, Rumi came to be recognized as a saint, a poet and a philosopher of eminence by all sections of the society. Rulers as well as scholars venerated him. Students and scholars came from distant places to listen to him and be in his company. Members of different sects of Islam came to participate in discussions.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi cast away his mortal shell on 17th December, 1273 A.D.. He was buried within the campus of his seminary. It necame a holy place of pilgrimage for all those who believed in the love-based spiritualism. For Sufis it became a source of inspiration. People came to pay their homage to Rumi from all over the world.

Kemal-Ata-turk, the founder of the modern Turkey, turned it into a museum and locked the door that led to the grave of Rumi. He considered it to be a superstitious practice to pay homage to graves. However, his prohibition failed to deter lovers of Rumi from visiting the Green Dome (the school where he is buried). It continued ceaselessly. People touched the walls of his school to pay their respect to this great soul.

Today, Konya figures prominently in the tourist-map of Turkey. For Rumi's admirers and followers, who are found all over the world, it remains a place of pilgrimage.

Hisamuddin Chalebi carried on the torch after Rumi's death. He made Shah Walad-who is also known as Sultan Walad, the head of the Rumi *Silsila* (tradition) of *Sufis*. Shal Walad, gave a formal shape to this '*Silsila*', which came to be known as the 'Maulaviya'–also the Mevlevi, school. It lays great stress on music and dance. They are treated as the best means to express one's love and devotion for God. Their dance is

executed on very fast drum-beats. The dancers soon reach the level of ecstasy and swirl and whirl to the fast beat of the drum. Due to this reason, the members of this tradition are called 'the Whirling Dervishes'. This tradition continues unchanged.

Works of Rumi

Three major works of Rumi are available today: Fihi-Ma-Fihi, Diwan-i-Shams and Masnavi-o-Manavi. Fihi-Ma-Fihi is in prose. It is a collection of Rumi's discourses on 'Tasawwuf' , the basic principles of Sufism. Rumi has explained the basic tenets of Sufism by citing examples and telling illustrative stories in it. The abstract mystic concepts of Sufism have been explained in simple language for the common man.

Diwan-i-Shams contains those *ghazals* (lyrics) which were composed by Rumi after Shams' departure. As mentioned earlier, its name is misleading. However, it is unmistakably a work of Rumi himself.

Masnavi-o-Manavi deals with all those Sufi beliefs and traditions which had developed till the time of Rumi ie. the 13th century A.D. However, it is not a dry treatise of theology. It is a most interesting work of literature. It contains poems, stories, folk-tales and interesting anecdotes. These contents have a tremendous emotional appeal. Rumi addresses a man's heart directly, not his reason. In this respect it is very similar to *Panchatantra* and *Hitopadesha* of India, from which Rumi has borrowed quite a few stories. This feature of Masnavi makes it one of the most readable literary works of the world. It has been a popular book in all ages.

Besides these major works many other works of Rumi are also available. Many letters of Rumi, addressed to contemporary associates and scholars are also available which give us an insight into his thoughts and ideas.

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Ecstatic whirling Dervishes.

There is no end to my story.
Or that of the beloved;
For, what hath no beginning
Can have no end.

-Hafiz

The rosary spoke to me in a strange tongue,
It said, "Why doest thou make my head reel?".
Wert thou to attend revolve to thine own heart instead
Thou would know the reason underlying man's creation.

-Dara-Shikoh.

Diwan-i-Shams: The Stream of Love

The separation from Shams caused a tremendous emotional turmoil in the heart of Rumi. These emotions found a release in the spring of poetry which gushed out of his heart. It turned the dry theologian into a poet of passion. His condition was similar to that of the *Gopis* (cowherd-girls) of Vrindavana after the departure of Krishna.

From 1245 to 1261 A.D., this stream of poetry flowed freely. Rumi expressed his love for his friend Shams in about fifty thousand poems in these seventeen years. Nobody has paid such a great tribute to his friend or beloved in any age. The collection of these poems is called 'Diwan-i-Shams'.

Normally, a Diwan is named after its composer e.g. 'Diwan-i-Ghalib contains poems of Ghalib. Generally, a Diwan contains poems composed in various meters. Lyrics (Ghazals), Quatrains (Rubai) and eulogy (Qasida) form its parts. Diwan-i-Shams is an exception on both counts. It is not named after its composer and it contains only ghazals.

The main theme of this work is love. What is love? Is it a person's deep admiration of the good looks of his beloved or is it something different? What is the true nature of love? Rumi explores various aspects and facets of love extensively and deeply in this Diwan.

What is ture love? Rumi explains its true nature:

Ishq Ast Dar Aasman Pareedan,
Sad Pardaa Bahar Nafas Dareedan.

Awwale – Nafas Az Nafas Gasistan,
Aakhir Qadam Az Qdam Bareedan.
Na deeda Giraftan Ein Jahaan Raa,
Mar Deedeh Khaweesh Raa Na Deedan.
Za Aan Sue Nazar Nazzara Kardan,
Dar Koochahe Sinahaa Daweedan.

Love is to fly heavenward,
To tear away a hundred veils every moment.
The very first moment, to renounce life,
The last step, to march without feet.
To regard this world as invisible,
Not to accept what appears before one.
To look beyond the range of vision,
To roam the streets of the heart.

It is apparent that love of this nature can not be aimed at any person nor can it be generated by carnal desires. It denotes a very special state of mind. In this state the loved-one becomes just a means or a medium to love the entire creation. The beloved becomes a symbol for the creation, a microcosm for the universe. The lover loves everything contained in it. He does not discriminate even between the living and the non-living.

In the eyes of Rumi, a heart devoid of love is an object of shame:

Aan Rooh Raa Ki Ishq-e-Haqiqi Shiyaar
Neest,
Na Boodeh Bah Ki Boodane oo Ghair Aar
Neest,
Dar Ishq Mast Baash Ki Ishq Ast Har
Cheh Hast,
Be Kaar-o-Baare Ishq Bar Yaar
Baar Neest.

It is good that the soul which had no true love
ceased to exist;
Otherwise it would be but shame.
Get drunk with love, love is all that exists;
Without the business of love, the Beloved
can not be reached.

Rumi believes that the spiritual love is immortal and the physical love is transitory. To love a human being-or any other creature, is like loving a corpse because all living creatures ultimately perish. Rumi, therefore, suggests that one should love the immortal and omnipresent Divine:

Ishq Ast Wa Aashiq Ast;
Ki Baaqist Taa Abd.
Dil Juz Bar Ein Manaa;
Ki Ba Juz Mast' aar Neest.
Taa Ki Kinaar–Geeri;
Maashooqaa Musradd Raa.
Jaan Raa Kinaar Gear;
Ki Oo Raa Kinaar Neest.

(Only) The love and the lover survive in eternity,
Do not set your heart upon anything else,
It (all others) is only momentary.
How long would you love
A beloved that is dead?
Embrace the soul which is endless.

Rumi has used the word *Kinaar* in this poem to convey two different meanings. In Persian, it means the bank of a river or the sea-shore and the act of embracing or seating someone in one's lap. The meaning is to be derived with reference to the context.

Is it necessary that a lover should have the company of his beloved or at least a view of her beauty? Can one sustain such

a love without the reward? Rumi holds the view that the expection of love's return is worse than the fear of death. Love, in itself, is its reward. Hence, one should go on loving without expecting or hoping for a reward:

Nazaara Gar Mabaash
Dar Ein Raahe Muntazir;
Wallah ki Hech Marg
Wa Tar za Intezaar Neest.

Do not be an expectant
Looker on this path;
By God! There is no death
Worse than this expectancy

The Personality of a Lover

A lover's duty is to love unreservedly. This is his life and his creed. Rumi had drowned all his old beliefs in the stream of love. Now, he belonged to no other creed or country. Only one goal remained before him now, to be with his Beloved. He merged his identity completely into that of his Beloved. The duality was over. In other words, his individual identity ceased to exist. There was no distinction between him and his friend. Only one entity existed. Rumi speaks eloquently about this wonderful experience:

Che Tadbir Ai Musalmaanaan
Ki Man Khud Raa Nami Daanam;
Na Tarsa Na Yahudam
Na Gaboram Na Musalmaanaan
Na Sharqeem Na Gharbeem,
Na Bareem Na Bahreem;
Na Az Kaane Tabeeyam
na Az Khaake Khurasanam;
Makaanam Laa Makaan Baashad,
Nishaanam Be Nishaan Bashad

Na Tan Baashad Na Jaan Baashad
Ki Man Az Jaane - Jaanaanaan
Dui Az Khud Badar Kardam
Yaki Deedam Do Aalam Raa;
Yaki Jooyam Yaki Daanam,
Yaki Beenam Yaki Khwaanam.

What to do, O Muslims!
For I do not recognise myself
Neither a Christian, nor a Jew,
Nor a fire-worshipper nor a Muslim am I
Neither of the East, nor of the West
Nor of the land nor of the sea,
I am not made by the nature,
Nor by the encircling heavens;
I am neither of India nor of China,
Nor of Bulgaria nor of Saqsin;
I am not of the Iraqi Land
Nor from Khorasan;
Placeless (Space) is my place,
Non-identity is my identity;
Neither the body exists nor the soul,
For, I belong to the soul of the Beloved;
I have done away with the duality,
I see the two worlds as one;
Only the one I seek, only the one I know
Only the one I seek only the one I call

To pursue this path of love, Rumi considers it essential to give up all worldly affairs. The false and un-edifying traits like attachment to material possessions, ego, pride, selfishness, envy and greed must be given up if one cherishes to have the enduring spiritual love. To this end, he calls out to all those who profess the creed of love:

Ai Aashiqaan! Ai Ashiqaan
Hangaam Koochast Az Jahaan;
Dar Gosh Jaanam mee Rasad,
Table Raheel Az Aasmaan.
Naak Sarbaan Barkhaastaa,
Qataarha Aaraastaa;
Az Maa Halaali Khwaastaa,
Che Khaftaa Aayad Ai Kaarvaan,
Ai Dil Sue Dildaar shav,
Ai Yaar Sue yaar shav,
Ai Paaswaan, Bedaar shaw
Khaftaa Nashaayad Paaswaan.
Har Sue Baang-o-Mashghile
Har Kooe Shamma-o-Mash'ale;
Ki Lmshad Jahaane Haamilaa,
Zaayad Jahaane Jaavidaan.

O Lovers! O Lovers!
The time to abandon the world has come;
My ears have heard the sound of the drums of heaven,
heralding the depature.

The driver has arisen
And readied the column of Camels,
He asks us to believe that he is loyal
O Traveller! Why are you (Still) asleep
O heart! Seek the Beloved,
O friend! Seek the Friend;
O Watchman! Wakeup,
It does not behove a watchman to sleep.
There is clamour and tumult everywhere,
Candles and torches are out in every street
(For) Tonight the pregnant earth gives
birth to an immortal (new) world.

This path of love is grand to behold but not easy to tread. A lover faces many problem and innumerable hardships. The Beloved is cruel. Unless the lover gets blooded from toes to the top, his heart does not take a fancy for the lover. Rumi, therefore, advises total surrender to His will. This act would earn His Grace.

Rumi paints a vivid picture of his heart's yearning as well as his total surrender to his beloved in this poem;

Dosh Man Paighaam Kardam,
Sue Tu A Sitaaraa Raa
Guftmansh Khidmat Rassan,
Az Man Tu Aan Mahpaaraa Raa
Sazdaa Kardam Guftam Aan,
Khudmat Ba Daan Khursheed Bar,
Ko Ba Taabash Zar Kuned,
Mar Sang haae Khaaraa Raa.
Seenae Khud Baaz kardam,
Zakhmhaa Ba Namood Mash,
Guftmash Az Man Khabas
Kun Dilbare KhoonKhwaaraa Raa.
Su-Bah-Su Gashtam Ki,
Taa Tifle Dilam Saakin Shavad,
Tifle Khaspad chun,
Ba Jan-Baanad Kasi Gahwaaraa Raa.
Tifle-Dil Raa Sheer Dih,
Maa Raa Za Giriya Ashwaarhaan,
Ai Tu Chaaraa Kardaa Hardam,
Sad Chu Man beechaaraa Raa.
Shahre Wasalat Boodaa Ast,
hgAakhir Za Awwal Jaae Dil,
Chand Daari Har Gharibee,
Ein Dile Aawaaraa Raa.

Man Khamsh Kardam wa lekin,
Az Pae Dafaa Khumaar,
Saaqiya Sarmast Girdaan,
Nargise Khumaaraa Raa.

Last evening, I gave a message to a star for you;
I said. "To that moon-face, offer my services."
I prostrated and said, "Bear that service to the sun,
Who turns hard rocks into gold with his heat."
I bared my chest and showed the wounds to it,
"Speak of my state to the Beloved, whose drink is blood."
I rocked to and for, to quieten my heart, the child;
For a child sleeps when one rocks the cradle.
Give milk to this child, my heart and stop his weeping
O You! who helps every moment a hundred
helpless like me
The heart's refuge, in the beginning and at
the end, is your city of union;
How long will you keep this heart away
in this hapless condition?
I Speak no more, but to save me from
this headache;
O Cup-bearer! Make my languishing
eye intoxicated.

Rumi poetry echoes his personal experiences. These expression were an outcome of his intense devotion to God, hence, their appeal is universal and sympathetic reader finds his own inner feelings reflected in these outpourings of Rumi.

Rumi was much tormented by the separation from his friend. He yearned day and night to be united with Shams. He felt like a fish out of water without him. He desceribes his condition in these words.

Mugh-O-Maahi za Man Shudaa Hariraan,
Ka Ein Shab-O-Roz Chun Nami Khaspad.

Pesh Az Ein Dar Azad Hami Burdam,
Ki Aasmaane-Nagoon Nami Khaspad.
Aasmaan Khud Kanoon Za Man Khiraa Ast,
Ki Che Raa Ein zaboon Nami Khaspad.
Ishq Bar Man Fusoone Aazam khwaanad,
Dil Shuneede Aan Fusson Nami Khaspad.

Birds and fishes wonder at my
wkefulness day and night

Earlier, I used to wonder why the
vaulted sky did not sleep!

Now the sky itself is surprised at
my tormented condition

Love has cast on me the spell of devotion
Thus, spell-bound, my heart sleeps no longer.

A person, who has spent sleepless nights waiting for the arrival of his beloved can empathise easily with Rumi and appreciate his anguish. This poem expresses the feelings of all lovers who have suffered the pangs of separation.

The memory of the days spent in company of Shams followed Rumi like a shadow at all times, every-where. Even while praying it did not leave him alone.

This changed the mode of his prayer. He found that whenever he tried to meditate upon the Divine, the form of his dear friend appeared before him. Now, he did not require any water for '*Wazoo*' (the ritual wash before the prayer). Tears came gushing to cleanse his hands. His heart, singed by the separation, became his prayer-house. The cries of his heart became the words of prayer. All this was as per the will of God. Rumi accepted this change as the Lord's will. Now, he had entrusted himself completely to the Lord's care. He believed that He would definitely lead him to his destination;

Chu Namaaze-Shaam Bar Kas
Banihad Chiraagh-o-Khwaani;
Manam wa Khayaale-yaari
Gham-wa-Nauha-wa-Fughaani
Chu Wazoo za Ashq Saazam
Bood Astishe-Namaazam;
Dar Masjidam Ba Sozad
Chu Dar Rasad Azaani.
Ajban Nammze-Mastaan
Tu Bigo Durust Hast Aan;
Ki Na Daanad Oo Zamaani
Na Shanaasad Oo Makaani.
Ajaban Do Rak'at Ast
Ein Ajban Chahaaram Ast Ein;
Ajaban Che Suraa Khwaandan
Chu Na Daashtam Zabaani.
Dar Haq Che Goona Koobam
Ki Na Dast Maanad Nai Dil;
Dil-o-Dast Chun Tu Burdi,
Ba Deh Ai Khuda Ammani
Ba Khuda Khabar Na Daaram
Chu Nammaz Mee Guzaaram;
Ki Tamaam Shud
Luaam shud Falaani.

When the lamps are lit and the food is laid
after the evening-prayer;
I am engrossed in the thoughts of my friend,
with sorrow, grief and lamentations.
With tears I perform the ablution,
Hence my prayers are like fire;
When the call for prayer is sounded,
the gate of my mosque is set on fire.

Strange is the prayer of those who are
drunk with love,
You tell me, Is it proper to pray without
any regard for the time and place?
Strange are these wo Rak'ats,
The fourth one is still far more stranger;
Most Strange! I recited the full chapter
without a tongue.
How do I knock at the gate of God?
I have neither hand nor heart;
O Lord! You have taken away my hand and heart;
Now you protect me.
By God ! I am not aware as I pray whether
the Imam (prayer-leader) has got up to lead the
prayer or the prayer has ended.

The physical world held no attraction for Rumi now. Even the heaven did not appeal to him. Generally, religious preachers hold the promise of paradise before their followers to keep them on the right path. They tell that if one followed the commands of God, He would reward the person with the pleasures of the paradise. Angels report all actions of people to Him and He decides on the basis of these reports. In short, heaven is the cherished goal of these preachers and their followers.

According to Rumi heaven is the first stop on the path of devotional love, not the destination. A lover's journey does not end there. He has to proceed much beyond heaven. If he gets entrapped by the pleasure of heaven, he never reaches his true destination. His journey ends only after he gets united with the Divine Element. At this stage the devotee sheds his sense of duality and becomes one with God.

This belief of Rumi, prima facie, appears to be at variance from the prevalent comtemporary Islamic theory. Rumi takes

pains to explain that, in fact, it is not so and that it is in full conformity with teachings of Islam. Acccording to Rumi, the Prophet, himself, acts as the guide for those who embark upon this path of love. In such a situation how could he be accused of heresy. Rumi says;

Bar Naqsh Aawaaze Ishq
Mi Rasad Az Chap-o-Raast;
Maa Ba Falak Mi Raweem
Azam Tamaashaa Ki Raat.
Maa Ba Falak Boodeh Ein
Yaare Malak Boodeh Ein;
Baaz Hamaanja Raveem
Khwaja Ki Aan Shahar Maast.
Khud Za Qalak Bar Tareem;
Wa Za Malak Afzoon Tareem;
Za Ein Do Che Raa Na Guzreem
Manzile-Maa Kibiryaast.
Aalame Khaak Az Kujaa
Gauhare Paak Az Kujaa;
Gharche Farwad Aamdeen
Baz Daweem Ein Che Jaast.
Yakt Jawaan Yaare Maa
Daadan Jaan Kaare Maa;
Qafile–Salaar Maa
Fakhre-Jahaan Mustafi Ast.

Love calls from left and right every moment; We go towards heaven; Who wants to see this wonderful spectacle!

We have been in heaven. We are angels friends. O Master! now let us return to our city.

We are higher than heaven. We are beyond the angels. Why should not we cross these two? Our goal is to reach the Supreme Being.

The world of dust comes from where? (From a different source). The world of the pure substance comes from where? (From another source). Though we came down, let us hurry back- what place is this?

Young fortune is our friend, our job is to give up our soul. The leader of our caravan is Mustafa (the Prophet), the pride of earth.

A legend tells that this was the favourite poem of Sheikh Saadi, the famous poet saint of Shiraz. He held it to be the finest composition of Persian poetry. He had made a copy of it in his own handwriting and presented it to Sultan Shamsuddin of Shiraz. According to Saadi, Rumi had touched a new height of spiritualism in this poem.

Diwan-i-Shams is full of such compositions. Lyrical expression of ecstatic experiences of love is the speciality of this work.

The Love-Based Devotional System

The devotional system of Rumi was very akin to asceticism. A devotee, he tells, should withdraw himself from the worldly affairs and pay attention to his inner-self like an ascetic. Selfless love for each and every member of the society should be his creed. Worship of the mankind as the manifestation of the Divine in place of the idol and giving up the degrading traits, such as, greed, violence, anger, attachment and lethargy were the initial steps of the devotional system advocated by Rumi. The objective was to ensure the free flow of love.

This could be possible only when a person had purified himself. Till a person was tied to the affairs of world he could not experience the spiritual bliss. The desire for sensual pleasures waylays the spiritual practitioner and entraps him in the web of attachment and animus. No difference exists between

such a man and animal. Rumi tells that it is essential to give up selfishness totally and strive ceaselessly for the common good to earn the love of the Divine.

This meaningful message is conveyed by Rumi in a very simple but forceful way:

Hamrange Jamaayat Shaw Taa Lazzate Jaan
Beeni,
Daar Kooe-Kharaabaat Aa Taa Durde-Kashaan
Beeni.
Dar Kash Kade Sauda Hal Taa Na Shavi
Ruswaa,
Dar Band Do Chasme-Sar Taa Chashme
Nihaan Beeni.
Ba Kashaae Do Daste Khud Ghar Mel
Kinaarastat,
Ba Shikane-Bute-Khaki Raa Taa
Rue Butaan Beeni.
Az Bahre Ajoozee Raa Chandeen Che
Kashi Kaabeen
Wa Za Bahre Sah Naan Taaki Shamshir-O-
Sanaan Beeni.
Shab Yaar Hami Gardad
Khaskhaash Makhur Imshab,
Bar Band Dahaan Az Khud
Taa Ta'ame-Dahaan Beeni.
Nake Saaqi Bi Jori
Dar Najlise-Oo-Dauri,
Dar Dor Dar Aabanasheen
Tar Ke Dauraan Beeni.
Injaast Rabaabangar Jaani
Deh Wa Sadastaani,
Gurgee-Wa-Sagee Kam Kun
Tar Mehre Shabaan Beeni.

Gufti-Ki-Falaani Raa
Biyaareed Za man Dushman
Rav Tarke Falaani Kun
Taa Haste Falaan Beeni.
Andeshaa Makun Alla
Az Khaaliqe Andeshaa,
Andeshaae-Jaan Behtar
Ki Andeshaa-i-Naan Beeni.
Yaa Was'ate Arze Allah
Dar Habs Che Khaspeedi,
Za Andeshaae Girah Kam Kun
Taa sharhe Janaan Beeni,
Khamosh Shav Az Guftan
Taa Guft Baree Baari,
Az Jaan-O-Jahaan Ba Guzar
Taa Jaane-Jahan Beeni.

Become one with the community,
to feel the joy of life.
Enter the street of the tavern
to see those who have enjoyed the wine.
Drink up the cup of passion,
that you may not be shamed;
Shut the two eyes of your head,
to see from your hidden eyes.
Stretch both your arms if
you desire an embrace,
Smash the idol of clay that you may behold
the face of the idol (ideal).
Why do you collect so much dowry for the
sake of this old woman?
How long would you eye the sword and the
spear for the sake of three loaves of bread?
The Beloved always visits in night,

do not consume opium tonight,
Close your mouth against food so that
you may taste the (inherent) sweetness of mouth.
Look, the cup-bearer is no oppressor,
there is a circle around him,
Come, join the circle, be seated;
how long would you watch the revolution (of time)?
At this place there is a bargain,
give one life and get a hundred,
Stop acting like wolves and dogs so that
you may feel the kindness of the shepherd.
You said, my enemy took away such a one from me,
Go away from such a person so that
you may realize the presence of Him.
Care for nothing except for the creator
of thoughts, Care for soul is better than
care for bread.
God's earth is so wide, why have you
fallen asleep in the prison (of desires)?

Avoid the confusing thoughts so that you may see (understand) the nature of paradise. Be quiet, do not speak so that you may be fluent later;give up the world and life so that you may see the life of the (spiritual) world.

The Non-Dualism of Rumi

The philosophy of Islam is very similar to that of Judaism and Christianity. Islam also accepts the Biblical account of the creation. According to it, God breathed life into an image made of dust and began the process of creation. Though Rumi expressed full faith in Islam and its Prophet, he was disinclined to accept this story about the origin of man. Rumi held the view that a man was not a mere composition of the five basic physical elements. He had a very exalted position in creation:

Az Aab-O-Aatish Neestam,
Wa Za Baade Sarkash Neestam.
Khaake Ma Naqsh Neestam
Man Bar Hamaa Khandeeda Am.

I am not made of water or fire,
I am not the fast blowing wind.
I am not the moulded clay,
I laugh at them all.

Like Kabir, Rumi also set no store by the formalities of religion. He was of the view that these visible observances had no connection with spiritualism or the true faith. Only the Grace of God could provide the spiritual insight to a devotee. This path was open to all. It was not necessary to subscribe to any particular faith or devotional regimen to experience it. He proclaims:

Ein Zamaan Wa Aan Zamaan Beeza Ast
Wa Murghe Ki Andar Oust.
Mazloom Wa Ashksataa Par Baashad
Haqeer Wa Masthaan.
Kufro-Imaan Daan Dar Ein,
Biza Safed-O-Zard Raa.
Waasilo-Fariq Miyaane Shaan
Bar Zakh La Ya – Baghyaan.
Biza Raa Chu Zere Par Khaveesh
Parwarad Az Karam.
Kufro-Deen Faanee Shud,
Murghe-Wahadat Par Fishaan.

This world and that world are the egg,
The bird is within it.
It is in darkness and its wings are broken;
Poor and contemptible.
Disbelief and faith are like the white and

the yellow of this egg,
A barrier exists between them,
which it can not break.
When He bestows Grace and takes the egg
under His wings,
Unbelief and faith disappear;
The bird of unity spreads its wings.

To declare that Kufr (Unbelief) and Deen (faith) were equally irrelevant to a devotee was a dangerous and daring act in the thirteenth century Islamic world of which Turkey was a part. Rumi, however, held no fears. He was beyond such cares.

He had attained the high pinnacle of the path of the devotional love. The orthodox theories held no meaning to him. He expressed his thoughts and emotions openly without any restraint or reservation. In a number of his expressions he is seen to be a vehement critic of some Islamic beliefs. The contemporary society had come to recognize and respect the genius of Rumi. People were convinced of his purity and sincerity. Due to this fact, he could escape the persecution and torture faced by many other *Sufi* saints.

Engrossed deeply in his devotional thoughts in the state of *Baqaa*, Rumi states:

Ma Dil Andar Raahe Jaan Andaakhtam
Ghalghalee Andar Jahaan Andaakhtam.
Maa Za Quram Ghazideem Maghaz Raa
Post Raa Peshe Sagaan Andaakhtam.
Jibba-O-Dastaar-O-Ilm-O-Qeel-O Qaal
Jumlaa Dar Aabe Rawaan Andaakhtam.
Az Kamaane-Shauqe-Teere Maarfat
Raast Kardeh Bar Nishaan Andaakhtaam.

We have forsaken the heart for the sake of soul;
We have caused a hullabaloo in the world.
We have ingested the essence of Quran,
And thrown the skin to the dogs.
We have cast off the mystic's tunic,the
scholar's turban, all knowledge and logic–
all of them together, in the flowing water;
We have shot the arrow at the target
with a bow of our choice.

Rumi considered it essential to discard all outer paraphenalia in order to pursue the true love. Only the childlike simplicity and full devotion could earn the Grace of God for a devotee. Mere acquisition of knowledge and the debating skill, generally, give rise to pride, which is an obstacle in the path of devotion. It is advisable to discard them.

Criticism of Rumi by Orthodox Theologians

These bold assertions by Rumi created an erroneous impression that he had lost faith in Islam. Many Islamic theologians of later years declared him to be a *Zindeeq* (heretic) and a non-believer. They criticized and condemned his concepts, beliefs, life-style and poetry. Condemming his Masnavi, a critic says:

Neest Zikr-O-Bahase-Israare-Buland
Ki Dawaanand Aulia Zan Su Kamand.
Jumlaa Sar Taa Sar Fisaanast-O-Fisoon
Kudakaanaa Qissa Haa Beruno Diroon.

In Masanavi there is no mention or discussion of mysticism or high concepts. There is nothing for a knowledgeble person to pay attention to.

It is full of stories, fit for children's entertainment only, from one end to the other.

Meer Abbas, a later poet, in the preface of his work, condemms Rumi's poetical expressions and claims superiority over him:

Ein Kalaame Sufiyaane Shoom Neest
Masnavi-e-Maulvi-e-Room Neest.

This work of mine is not like those of the Sufis. It is not the Masnavi of the Moulvi of Rum.

In reality, these criticisms of the Maulana are totally misplaced—far from facts and truth. Rumi firmly believed that a devotee should follow the directions of the Prophet scrupulously in the initial phase. Only then he would be able to reach the higher stage of the self-realisation. At this stage he would be able to attain the position of deciding what is right and what is wrong by himself. Rumi says:

If your eyes have the full vision, then take up the journey on your own.

If you are blind, do hold a staff in your hand. If you are devoid of knowledge and intellect, then, do not stand in the middle of the road without a guide.

Pursue the path as a blind man does: step, by step avoiding the pit falls and the snapping by dogs.

If a person embarks upon an unknown path then a two-days' journey turns into a hundred years' travel for him. Anyone who leaves for Kaaba without a guide becomes the laughing–stock of all. Anyone who opts for a trade without engaging an instructor becomes a target of derision and criticism for the entire city as well as the country-side.

Rumi instructs his followers to abide by the Prophet's directions with full sincerity and faith. However, he does not rule

out the possibility that at some stage a devotee may gain the capability to chalk out his own path. Rumi provides this freedom to his followers.

While Rumi permits the devotee to find his own path, he cautions him sternly that this path would be extremely difficult and hazarduous. Cries of frustration, bitter tears, exasperation and exhaustion would greet him at every step. Pain would be the reward of his efforts. This would be the return for his love. However, Rumi terms the pain and suffering caused by the separation from one's Beloved to be the greatest bliss that a lover may aspire for.

Rumi illustrates this point in a dialogue between a devotee and the Lord:

Guftam Shahaa Bas Qatraa Haa
Dar Hijre Tu Baaridaa Am;
Guftaa Che Gham Bar Qatraa Raa
Man Loloe Makanoon Kunam.
Guftam Shahaa Bisyaar Shab
Deeda Nai Aaludam Ba Khwaab;
Guftaa Shabe Raa Sad Shabee
Dar Umre Tu Afazoon Kunam.

I said, O King! I have shed many tears in your separation.

He said, Why do you grieve? Each drop of your tear would turn into a beautiful pearl.

I said, O King! I have remained sleepless on many nights.

He said, For every such a night, you will get hundred nights.

If love is true then neither the obstacles of the path nor the indifference of the Beloved can deter the devotee. His yearning and the hope of union would spur him on. Rumi describes the ardent desire of a devotee in this poem:

Ba numaae Rukh Ki Bagh-
O-Gulistanam Aarzoost,
Ba Kushaae Lab Ki Qand
Faraawaanam Arzoost.
Guftee Za Naaz Besh Mar
Na –Jaan Ma Raa Biro,
Aan Guftanat Ki Besh Mar
Na Jaanam Arzoost.
Yak Dast Jaame Baadaa
Wa Yak Dast Zulfe-Yaar,
Raqs Chuneen Miyaan-e
Maidaanam Aarzost.

Show your face; I yearn for the orchard
and the rose-garden;
Open your lips, I yearn for sugar in plenty
You said, capriciously, "Go away!
Do not bother me."
I yearn to hear these words of yours,
"Do not bother me again and again."
In one hand the cup of wine and in the
other the locks of my Beloved,
A dance in the market-place, for such a pose,
my heart yearns.

Like Mira Bai, Rumi, also, did not care for the social norms and traditions in the matters concerning his love for the Lord. People's reaction- supportive or adverse, was of no consequence to him. Like Mira, he was always prepared to dance in the open to please his Beloved.

Rumi, at times, upbraids and taunts his Beloved for His inattention and indifference: "Just love me once; I am not stone-hearted like you. I shall lavish love upon you:"

Gar Ba Deene Zaari Tu Boodi
Aashiqe Man Har Zamaan,
Bar Dilat Bakhsheed Mee
Wa Bosaae Bakhsheed Mee
War Tu Boodi Ham Chu Man
Saabit Qadam Dare-Raahe-Ishq
Bar Tu Hargiz Chun Tu Bar
Man Deegari Na Guzeed Mee.
Gar Che Bar Jor-O-Jafaae
Tu MaRaa Qudrat Badee
Yaa Za Khalqam Sharm Boodi
Yaa Za Haq Tarseed Mee.

If you (like me) were to love me with full submission and humility, I would forget your lapses and reward you with a kiss.

If you (like me) were firm-footed in the path of love, I would not go for any other person (as you do).

If I had the power and the desire to spurn (like you), (I would not exercise it); Out of the sense of the public shame or the fear of God.

Here, the poet laments that his Beloved neither cares for the public opinion nor the fear of God. He has no concern for His devotee's humble submission. A simple and sincere devotee like Rumi can not contemplate shifting his love elsewhere. He would nip it in the bud if any such desire comes up in his heart. He would not like to appear in the eyes of the public and God as a fickle person. He would continue to love even if it is unrequited.

Rumi's message to Devotees

Rumi warns his followers again and again about the hardships that a devotee has to endure on the path of love. Many devotees mistake physical love or infatuation for the spiritual love. Rumi tells them that the two are poles apart. If a devotee is not able to differentiate between the two, serious mischief would occur:

Insaaf Bade Ki Ishq Neko Kar Ast
Za Aan Sat Khalal Ki Tabaah Pad Kirdaar Ast.
Tu Shahavate Khaveesh Raa Laqabe Ishq Nahi
Az Shahavat Taa Ba Ishq Rahe Bisyaar Ast.

It is correct that (physical) love leads to goodness, trouble is caused by the evil nature of man. You give the name of love to lust. There is a great chasm between lust and love.

We have discussed Rumi's love for music earlier. While composing 'Diwan-i-Shams' Rumi paid full attention to its musical aspect also. Hence the lyrics and quatrains of the Diwan are like songs; these can be easily set to music. Their rhythm and the rhyming ends help musicians to set them to the beat. This feature has made Rumi's lyrics very popular among the *Sufi* singers. Even today, his lyrics are sung by popular singers in *Sufi* congregations.

Rumi discusses at length the concepts of non-duality in this work. In these discussions one gets a glimpse of the maturity of Rumi's philosophical thinking.

Alluding to the nature of the state of the non-duality, he says:

Mee Guft Dar Biyaabaan
Rind Dahaan Bureeda,

Sufi Khuda Na Daarad
Ou Neest Aafreeda.

An outspoken drunkard said in a desert that a Sufi has no God of his own because he is never born (is never separated from God).

A *Sufi* is never separated from his Beloved (God), hence, there is no distance between the two. Thus merged together the two form one entity. In such a situation of non-duality or complete unity the question of accepting or not accepting the existence of God does not arise.

Many sayings of Rumi have taken the form of popular proverbs. One of them, which is oft-quoted, is about the course of the human life:

Haasile Umr Sah Sukhan Besh Neest,
Khaam Boodam, Pukhtaa Shudam, Sokhtam.

Human life can best be described in three phrases-I was raw: I matured and I got burnt (destroyed).

Rumi firmly believed that by acquiring the true knowledge, a man can leave behind the illusory mirage of this world and reach his goal i.e. the unification with the Supreme Divine Element. He constantly reminds his disciples of this focal point. He motivates them to strive hard to acquire the true knowledge:

Ilme Ki Tu Raa Girah
Gashaayad Ba Talab,
Zaan Pesh Ki Az Tu
Jaan bar Aayad Ba Talab.
Aan Neest Ki Hast
Mee Numaayad Ba Guzaar,
Aan Hast Ki Neest
Ba Numaayad Ba Talab.

Acquire the knowledge, which unravels
all knots, before your life is over.
Let go those things, which are non-existent
in reality but appear as the reality
Look for those elements which are 'real'
but appear to be non-existent.

This concept of Rumi appears to be very similar to the Indian Vedantic theory, which had proclaimed that only 'the Divine is true, the world is false' (*Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya*) and 'the world made of the five basic elements is like the water of a mirage' (*Pancha-Bhutatmakam Vishwam Marichijala Sannibham*). These concepts had been promulgated a few centuries earlier by the Vedantins.

A person, who comes to have this realization, rises above the narrow sectarian beliefs. He becomes free of all bonds of ritualism and orthodox conventions. His outlook and world –view undergoes a complete transformation:

Az Kufr wa za Islam
Berron Saharaae Ast,
Ma Raa Ba Miyaan
Aan Fizaa Saudaai Ast,
Aarif chun Badaan Raseed
Sar Raa Ba Nihad,
Na Kufr na Islam
Na Aan Jaa Jaa'e Ast

There is a world beyond belief (Islam) and disbelief (Kufr). We are enamoured of the atmosphere therein.

The wise (mystic), on reaching the place, bows his head. Neither Islam nor Kufr exists in this place.

Rumi attaches much importance to aesthetics or appreciation of beauty. God is the most resplendent and beautiful element. Since everything in this world is a gift from Him, Rumi loves all. A flower-garden, a patch of fragrant roses, a prattling nightingale, a melodious tune or a handsome person - all remind Rumi of their creator. Rumi loves the Creator as well as his creation. These beautiful things show to him the artistic nature of God. He must be a wonderful artist to make such lovely things.

However, a beautiful object, per se, does not hold any attraction for him. He loves the object because it happens to be a creation of his Beloved. This fact makes it an object of veneration for him.

Bar Har Jaae Yakih
Sar Niham Masjood Ou Ast,
Har Shash Jahat wa
Beroon za Shash Maabood Ou Ast,
Bagh-O-Gul Bulbul-O
Samaa wa Shaahid,
Ein Jumlaa bahaanaa
Wa Hamaa Maqsood Ou Ast.

Whenever I prostrate, only to him do I Bow.
In all six directions or beyond these six directions
I worship Him only.
The garden, the rose, the nightingale,
the ecstatic music and the beautiful maiden are a mere excuse;
He alone is the intended objective.

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2. Jalaluddin Rumi : Bareuzidah-i-Diwan-i-Shams Tabrez, 1957.

A decorated page from a manuscript of 'Masnavi-o-Manavi' from Central Asia. Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi

I went to the potter's workshop yesterday,
And saw two thousand pots
Chattering and quite.
Suddenly a pot got excited and roared,
That it was itself
The potter, the buyer and the pot-seller.

-Omar Khayyam

When the sea subsided, it become a whirlpool,
And at times it opened its eyes and become a bubble;
This wave is the manifestation
Otherwise O'Dard!
This whirlpool and the bubble
and the waves are simple water.

-Khwaja Mir Dard

Masnavi-O-Manavi: Rumi's World View

Krishna-Dvaipayana Vyas, also known as Ved Vyas, is considered to be one of the greatest poets of India. He achieved this eminence for composing the *Mahabharat*, which came to be called the 'Fifth-Veda' (*Pancham Veda*). Vyas was equated with Brahma, the Progenitor, for having created the large number of characters in this epic. Indian sages remarked that 'though he (Vyas) did not have four heads (like Brahma) yet he was a creator' (*achaturvadano Brahama*). Proverbs like 'Vyas has touched every issue of this world' (*Vyasochhishtam Jagat Sarvam*) and 'What is not found in *Mahabharat* is not to he found in India' (*Yat Na Bharate, Tat Na Bharate*) became popular sayings.

The respect, adulation and the high-praise that *Mahabharat* got in India was accorded to the Masnavi of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi in the Persian literary world. It was equated with the Holy Book. Jami, the famous Sufi Saint Declared, '*Neest Paighambar Wale Daarad Kitab*' (He (Rumi) was not a prophet though he did have a book). *Sufis*, of course, set great score by this work.

In this book Rumi deals with subjects which are useful to all. Topics of universal interest like spiritualism, ethics, proper human conduct, love for fellow human beings as well as love for God and the ways of devotion have been discussed in the Masnavi. To make these abstract concepts understood by common people Rumi has cloaked them in parables, anecdotes and stories. Some stories, with due reference have been taken from 'Kaleela-O-Dimna', the Persian translation of the famous

Sanskrit work *Panchatantra*. This had been translated into Persian and Arabic many years earlier and was very popular in the region.

This work of Rumi proved to be the most popular because it deals with various aspect of human life. Its message is useful and relevant to all people of all times. It is read with interest widely even today for that reason.

It took Rumi twelve long years to compile it. Hisamuddin Chalebi, his close disciple and aide assisted him greatly in accomplishing this task. He shadowed him throughout this period. He faithfully recorded the stories, parables and verses that issued from his master's lips. It must have been a very arduous task to record the twenty five thousand and seven hundred verses of this monumental work. For Vyas this Himalayan task had been performed by Lord Ganesha, a divinity. Hisamuddin, though he was a mere mortal, accomplished it meticulously. No wonder, many scholars call the Masnavi by the name of "Husaminama" for this reason. For his labours, Hisamuddin's name also gained immortality along with that of Rumi and the Masnavi.

Message of the Masnavi

The Masnavi was written with a purpose. It had a mission. 'Diwan-i-Shams' had been composed by Rumi to give expressions to his inner feelings and spiritual experiences. The Masnavi aims at making the mankind aware of its true nature. Rumi wants every man to be aware and conscious of his mission in life. The Masnavi was not for the poet's self-satisfaction but for the general welfare of the people at large.

Rumi discusses this central point elaborately. He asks, "Does an artist paint a picture for the sake of the picture? Does a potter make a pot for the sake of the pot? Does a calligrapher

write artistically for the sake of the script?" Answering his own question, he emphatically says, "No, the artist paints for the viewer; the potter makes pots for people to use them in their day-to-day life; a calligrapher strives hard to make others aware of the beauty of the script."

Rumi , similarly, wrote the Masnavi to make spiritualism an abstract, dry and complex subject—simple, enjoyable and understandable for the common people. "If you are thirsting for the ocean of spiritualism," he said, "come and halt at the island of the Masnavi."

The central theme of the Masnavi is the Unity of man and the Divine. As the Holy-Book puts it, "God is the source of all that exists and unto Him all would return." This core concept of the Holy Book is the foundation of the Masnavi. Explaining this concept, Rumi Says:

Bar Kasee Ko Door Maanad, Az Asl Khaveesh
Baaz Joyad Rozgaare Wasl Khaveesh

Everyone, who is far away from his source, recalls and wishes back the time when he was united with it.

Islam believes- Jews and Christians also share this belief, that man is the best and most beautiful creation of God. God created man after his own image and breathed his own spirit into him to act as the life-force.

The Divine breath became the soul or the spirit within the human body. Rumi bases his view that man is essentially a part of the Divine on this tenet. Though soul is not visible yet it remains present in a man always. The body and the soul are complimentary to each other:

Tan Za Jaan Wa Jaan Wa Tan Mastoor Neest;
Lek Kas Raa Deed-e-Jaan Dastoor Neest.

Neither the body is veiled from soul nor the soul from body; yet none has the permission to see the soul.

This soul or spirit is the source of the human consciousness and all sensitivities. Love is the source of all human emotions and sensitivities. The soul and love are the two sides of the same coin. Love is the motivational force of all human activities. This is the fount of all bliss. It is the melody in the sound of the flute; it is the intoxicating ferment in the wine:

Aatishe Ishqast Ki Andar Nai Fataad;
Joshashe Ishqast Ki Andar Mai Fataad.

It is the fire of love that is in the flute;
It is the fervour of love that is in the wine.

The Masnavi starts with the lament of the flute. A cluster of reeds stood on the bank of a river. A flute-maker selected a reed and cut it away. He drilled hole into it and made a flute. When a player breathed air into it, it cried out to its lost kith and kin. It wailed for its place of birth. The listeners raptly listened to its tune because it reminded them of their own origin i.e. God:

Ba Shuno Az Nai Hikaayat Mee Kunad;
Az Judaai Haa Shikaayat Mee Kunad.

Listen! What is being told by the flute; it is complaining about its separation.

The Creation and the Mankind: Rumi's Outlook

According to Rumi, God created three categories of living creatures. The first category consisted of angels, who possessed the divine knowledge and were capable of pursuing the spiritual path.

The second set contains birds, animals and other living organisms whose life is governed by the basic instincts-hunger, thirst, fear, sleep and sex.

The third set is composed of Adam's descendants, who combine the faculties of the above two categories. A man can acquire the true knowledge and rise upto the level of angels or get debased to the level of beasts. If he is overpowered by the sensual pleasures he would be reduced to the level of an animal.

Angels are repositories of the spiritual knowledge, wisdom and compassion. They are full of love for God. These enlightened beings are above attachment or animus.

Animals are devoid of intellect. Their life-cycle follows a regular pattern driven by their basic instincts. This is the reason why animals do not suffer from any dilemma or any confusion. Nature decides their course of life.

Man stands in the middle. He possesses angel-like qualities as well as the animal instincts. Knowledge uplifts him to the lofty heights of the angelic existence. Lust and sensual pleasures' obsession drag him down to the level of animals. His heart is enamoured of the enlightened state but at the same time it is tempted by the worldly pleasures also. This situation creates the conflict, confusion and the stress in a man's life.

Rumi, further, divides the mankind into three groups. The first group is of those saintly and devout persons who are able to visualize and realize their true self. By dint of their devotion, good conduct and austerities they are able to attain the high station of angelic existence. Though their physical appearance remains akin to other human-beings, their inner personality turns angelic-pure and unblemished. Jesus Christ and Prophet Mohammad are the best examples of this group. Rumi holds them to be greater than angels. Angels get their pure and enlightened form as a gift from God. They do not achieve it through their own endeavours. People like the Prophet achieve this state on their own. They have to make tremendous efforts and sacrifices to achieve it.

The second category is of those persons who opt for the animal like existence. Only their appearance-the human body, distinguishes them from other animals. Their life revolves around the circle of animal instincts of hunger, thirst, fear, sleep and sex only.

Like Indian sages, who called such persons as 'animals without horns and tails' (*Pashu-puchh Vishana-Heenah*), Rumi also calls them as animals without the beast-like faces.

The third group contains those persons who wish to achieve enlightenment and rise above the animal-instincts but are unable to find their way to enlightenment due to ignorance. If such a person is able to find a guide, he reaches the peak of enlightenment and touches the sphere of the glory of God. He becomes a realized self. Such a person turns into a mirror which reflects the image of the Divine. Others can also see their true self in this mirror. Such a man is known as a man of God.

Rumi equates a pure heart with a clear and clean stream and pure and clean air. If the stream's water is clean and clear, one can see the sand and pebbles on its bed. Likewise, is the personality of a man of clean heart-transparent. His thoughts and conduct are open. Nothing is camouflaged or concealed. Others can peep into his mind as well as into his heart. Rumi cited the example of such a worthy man repeatedly before his disciples and appealed to them to keep their heart clean, clear and pure.

Rumi's Theory of Evolution

Rumi believes in the theory of evolution. Man is the end product of a long natural process of evolution, according to him. This theory of Rumi is at variance from the Hebraic religious tradition and more akin to the Indian philosophical view. Judaic, Christian and Islamic beliefs are based on the biblical story of genesis which tells that God had made Adam with a handful of

clay. Adam, the first man, was not the outcome of any evolutionary process.

Rumi believes that the inorganic mineral substances came into existence first. Then the vegetation came into being. The life-force remained dormant at this stage. The evolutionary process continued. Next came the animal and man evolved from animals. Further progress depends upon the man now. By earning the Grace of God, by maintaining good conduct a man can attain the stature of angels. However, this is not his final destination. The position of an angel would gain for him proximity to the Divine. Through intense love and devotion he can unite with the Divine and become one with Him. This would be the completion of the evolutionary process.

This realization freed Rumi from fear of death. He considered death to be a wrung in the ladder which takes a man to the higher stage of evolution. Elaborating this theory Rumi says:

Za Aan Ki Margam Ham, Chu Jaan Khush Aamdast,
Marge-Man Dar Was Change Andar Zadast.

Death is as pleasant as life to me; Within it is contained my well-being.

Outlining the long process of evolution, Rumi says:

Az Jamaadi Murdam Wa Naame Shudam,
Wa Za Namaa Murdam Ba Haivaan Barzandam.
Murdam Az Haivaani Wa Aadam Shudam,
Pas Che Tarsam Kai Za Murdam kam Shudam.
Hamlae Deegar Ba Miram Az Bashar
Taa Bar Aadam Az Malaik Par Wa Sar.
Wa Za Maak Ham Baaidam Jastan Za Ju,
Kal Shai Haalak Alaa Wajah.

Baare Deegar Az Malak Qurbaan Shudam,
Aan Che Andar Wa Ham Naayad Aan Shavam.
Bas A'dam Gardam A'dam chun Arghanoon,
Gooydam Ki Anaa Alaih Rajoun.

I died to the inorganic state and got a new form of growth; then I died to that growth and attained the level of an animal.

I died as an animal and became Adam (a man); why should I fear (death); By dying I have never become inferior. When I leave this human form, I shall rise and be among the angels.

I must escape from angels. Except His face everything is perishable. I shall be sacrificed yet again and die as an angel; then I shall become something which is beyond imagination. Then I shall cease to exist; Like a loud organ the non-existence proclaims: Verily unto Him shall we return.

Ridding himself of the fear of death, Rumi became totally free of all worldly concerns and worries. All worldly affairs became irrelevant to him. Describing this wonderful state of liberation, Rumi says:

Manbale Ni Ko Bakaf Pol Aavarad,
Manbale Cheesti Kaz ein Pol BaGuzarad.
Aan Nah Ko Bar Har Dookaani Barzadan,
Bale Jahad Aan Ko-O-Kaani Barzadan.
Marge-Shirin Gasht-O-Naqalam Za Ein Saraa,
Chun Qafas Hastan Pareedan Murgh Raa.

(I am) not the vagabond who carries small change in his cuff; I am a clever person who would cross through this bridge (to the other world).

(I am) not the one, who knocks at every shop; I am the one who gets away from the very existence and uncovers the

mine (of reality). I find death and departure from this house (world) as sweet as leaving the cage and flying away would be to a bird:

Rumi tells that this liberation can not be attained by stuyding the scriptures or through debates and discussion or physical austerities. Unless the devotee annihilates his ego, he can not attain the state of non-existence or the non-duality. Rumi seems to be echoeing the message of Kathopanished *Nayamatma Provanchanena Labhyah Na Medhya No Bahudha Shrutena* (The self can not be gained by holding discourses or learning or intelligence). To claim that one has acquired the knowledge about the Divine without achieving the state of non-duality would be only a false and hollow boast. Rumi cites an example to illustrate this point:

Bood Anaa-al-Haq Dar Labe Mansoor Noor,
Bood Anaa-Allah Dar Labe Faroun Zoor,
Shud Asaa Andar Kafe Moosi Gawaa,
Shud Asaa Andar Kafe Saahar Habaa.

"I am Truth," (this statement) on the lips of Mansoor was the light (of truth), "I am God;" on Pharaoh's lips was a lie.

The staff in the hands of Moses became a witness (of truth); In the hands of a magician it became a mote in the air(a worthless object).

The Pluralism of Rumi

Rumi was of the opinion that there are various ways to attain this goal. In this context also he stands apart from his contemporary theologians. He is a pluralist. He believes that people of different lands and communities could conduct their devotional practices and worship in their own way. They need not convert to any particular religion. The final destination would be the same. He felt that it is easier to follow one's own

traditions. Hence, he advocated for full religious freedom. He says.

Har Kasee Raa Seerate Ba Nihaadeh Am;
Har Kasee Raa Istilaahe Daadeh Am.

To every man I have granted the choice of his special way of action; To every man I have given the faculty of expression.

Rumi is bold enough to explain his point of view by citing clear examples:-

Hindustan Raa Istilaahe Hind Madah,
Sindiaan Raa Istilaahe Sind Madah,
Man Na Girdam Paak Az Tasbihsaan
Paak Ham Aishaan Shawand On Dar Fishaan.
Maa Zabaan Raa Na Nigreem Wa Qaal Raa;
Maa Daroun Raa Ba Nigreem Ou Haal Raa.
Millate-Ishq Az Hamaa Deen Haa Judaast;
Aashiqaan Raa Millat-O-Mazhab Khudaast.

Among Hindus, the idiom of Hind is worthy of praise; Amng Sindhis, the idiom oj Sindh is worthy of praise.

I do not gain purity by their glorification (of me); It is they who become pure by doing so. I do not look at the language or the speech; I look at their inner spirit and their state of feeling.

The religion of love is different from all religions; For lovers, the only religion and creed is God.

Like Chaitanya-Mahaprabhu of India, Rumi also believes that God accepts only the true devotional fervour of His devotees. He has no use or care for the rites and rituals and other religious paraphernalia-*Bhava-Graahi Janardanah.*

If the devotee's heart is pure and his devotion is true he need not subscribe to any established religion, Rumi believed.

Rumi advocates Positive Action

Rumi advises his disciples to practice detachment from worldly affairs but he is not an advocate of renunciation. He does not ask them to give up active life and retire to a monastery or a cave. On the other hand he emphasizes strongly upon pursuing an active and righteous course of life. To him there was no contradiction between the physical world and the spiritual world. Instead, he considered them to be complimentary to each-other. On this point, he differs from other *Sufis*. He does not condemn riches or wealth. If a person earns wealth with proper means and utilizes it for the welfare of the society, he follows the correct path. Rumi says:

Ilm-O-Hikmat Za Aayad Az Lukmaa-e-Halaal;
Ishq-O-Raqqat Za Aayad Az Lukmaa-e-Halaal.

According to Rumi, the right conduct and action elevate a man to the state of enlightenment- "Juhad Kun Taa Mast Wa Noorani Shavad,"

On this score also, Rumi appears to be in consonance with the Karmic theory of the Indian philosophy- *Dhanaat Dharmah Tatah Sukham* (Wealth used for common good, ushers bliss).

In the middle-age, many Christian monks used to renounce the world and retire to monasteries located in hills, deserts and forests. Rumi was critical of their ways:

Masalahat Dar Deen Maa Jang-O-Shikoh;
Masalahat Dar Deene-Isaai Ghaar-Ba-Koh.

Struggle and glory gained thereby are the recognized tenets of our faith; living a solitary life in a cave or a hill is the tradition of the Christian faith.

Rumi believes that a man imbued with idealism is always active. When God, Himself, is always active, how can his devotees remain inactive? He asks. Proper conduct and endeavour for the common good, according to Rumi, are the main traits of a true devotee. By following the path of proper conduct, a devotee is able to submerge his ego into Divine and become one with Him-obtain the state of *Fanaa*. Once this unity is achieved the individual identity ceases to exist though his physical existence continues to be. In this state of *Baqaa* he becomes a part of the all pervading Divine Element. His physical personality (*Khaaq*) acquires the marks of God. Rumi motivates his disciples to acquire this state:

Baange Mazlumaan za Har Jaa ba Shunawand;
Aan Taraf Chun Rahamate Haq Mee Davand.
Aan Sutoonhae Khalalhaae Jahaan
Aan Tebeebane Marzhaae Nihaan
Mahaz Mehar-o-Daavari wa Rahamatand;
Ham chu Haq be Illat wa Be Rishwatand

From all directions they hear the cries of
the oppressed and like the Mercy of God,
rush to their help.
Those pillars to support the falling world,
Those healers for the hidden diseases;
Are pure kindness, love and justice,
Like God, Himself, they are flawless and unbribed.

Rumi propounds the profound concept of the '*Nishkam-Karmayoga*' (selfless action) in a beautiful way in this simple verse. One finds in the favourite prayer-song of Mahatma Gandhi- *Vaishnava Jana To Tene Kahiye, Je Peer Paraai*

Jane Re (Call that man a devotee of God, who realizes the sufferings of others), the echoe of the sentiments of Rumi. This prayer-song is a composition of Narsi Mehta, a renowned saint-poet of Gujarat.

For such a realized soul, no difference exists between the living and the non-living elements. He is able to establish rapport even with the inconscient elements of nature;

Baad Hammale Suleimaani Shawad,
Bahar Ba Moosi Sukhan Daani Shawad;
Maah Ba Ahmad Ishaarat Been Shawad
Naar Ibrahim Raa Nasreen Shavad

The wind becomes a bearer for Solomon,
The Sea understands the words of Moses;
The moon understands and follows the signs of Ahmed (Mohammad)
The fire becomes wild-roses for Abraham.

Time—past, present or future, holds no meaning for such persons. The limits of time and space fail to contain or confine them. They become limitless. They become relevant in all times.

La-Makaani ki Dar-Ou-Noore-Khudast,
Maazi-wa-Mustaqbil-wa-Haal Kujaast.
Maazi-wa-Mustaqbilash Nisbate-Ba-Tu-Sat
Har Do-Yak Cheezad Pindaari Ki Do Sat.

The man, who possesses the Light of God ,is placeless (Beyond Space), Where is the past, the future or the present for him.

The past and the future have meanings only in relation to you (your existence), both are the one and the same, but you think that they are two.

Like Vyasa, Rumi is also of the opinion that man is capable of achieving the highest state. There is nothing beyond his reach. By adhering to the right path and abiding by the ideals and values of it, he can touch the divinity and universalize his personality.

He says:

Joharast Insaan wa Charkhe-Ou-Raa Arz,
Jumlaa Far'a Wa Paae And-wa-ou-Gharz.
Bahar Ilmi Dar Nami Pinhaan Shudaa,
Dar Sah Gaz Tan Aalami Pinhaan Shudaa

Man is the substance, the sky is his extension;
He (God) is the object, all other things are the steps of the stair-case;
You are the sea of knowledge, confined in a dew-drop
You are the universe hidden in a three hand long body.

Rumi is of the view that time has the control over only the physical body of a man. The body is bound to come to its end, when its life-span is over. This is an inescapable fact. However, the soul is beyond the reach of time. Once the physical body-which confines it, perishes, it gains immortality by uniting with the Divine:

"Juz-wa-Juzwash Raa Tu ya Shamar Hamchuneen;
Ein Daroon Waqt wa Aan Berune Heen
Ein Ki Dar Waqt Sat Baashad Taa Ajal,
Waan Deegar yaare Abd Qarne Azal."

This is within time but that is beyond time,
This, the time-bound, remains till death;
The other is an associate of the eternity.

Once, this realization takes place, the difference between the devotee and the Divine disappears. The devotee discovers that He is enshrined in his heart. It makes him godly. He sees his presence everywhere. He becomes oblivious of his physical form and proclaims aloud, "I am God".

The traditional orthodox theologians, preachers and priests fail to recognize the true personality of such persons. They denounce and condemn them as pretenders and heretics. Mansoor Hallaj, the famous *Sufi*, had to suffer due to this reason. He had been condemned as an apostate and an atheist and condemned to death. Rumi was also exposed to this danger but he was impervious to it. Like Mansoor, he had also declared:

Gah Tu Ein Goyim Tu Raa Gaahi Manam;
Har Che Goyam Aftaabe Roushanam

Sometime I say that you (God) are there;
Sometime I say that I am there.
Whatever I may say (the truth is that)
I am the sun that lights up everything.

A reader, surprisingly, finds a great similarity between the concepts held by Rumi and Mansoor Hallaj and the Upanishadic seers of India. These *Sufi* saints might have come across these Indian philosophical views. However, this is also possible that they arrived at these conclusions through their own endeavours and experiences.

Rumi cautions again and again that the state of the non-duality can not be obtained through reasoning or studies alone. He uses a parable to illustrate this point. This interesting parable is about a grammarian and a ferryman.

A scholar, after having mastered the intricacies of grammar, set out on a journey. He took a boat to cross a river.

The grammarian, who was very proud of his knowledge, asked the ferryman, "Have you studied grammar?"

The ferryman answered, "No, I haven't." The grammarian felt sorry for him.

"You have wasted half of your life." he remarked.

The poor ferryman felt very awkward. However, he did not retort and kept silent.

A storm broke midway. The boat started rocking.

"Sir, have you learnt swimming?" The boatman asked.

"No, I didn't." the scholar told him.

"Then you are going to lose your entire life." the boatman remarked and jumped out of the boat.

This simple story tells us that the mastering of a branch of learning is not enough to lead a meaningful life. It would be most improper for a man- who has gained proficiency in one branch of knowledge, to boast that he has come to know everything. To live a meaningful life a man needs to acquire knowledge about all aspects of life. It is also essential that he should have respect for others who possess skills and knowledge. A seeker of knowledge must have humility.

Rumi advises that once a person decides to pursue the path of devotional love, then, he should seek the help of a mentor or a teacher for guidance. Without a guide, he would flounder here and there and never reach his destination. This guide should be selected with due care and caution. Many persons pretend to be men of great spiritual attainment. In reality, such boastful persons are the lieutenants of Satan. They have a forked tongue. Though outwardly they mouth the words of wisdom like true ascetics and sages, their heart remains mired in lust and other worldly vices.

A devotee would do well to be at a great distance from these cheats. Warning his followers against such pretenders, Rumi says,

Chun Basi Iblees Aadam Rue Hast,
Pas Ba Har Dasti Nashaayad Daad Dast.
Harfe Darveshaan Bad-zadad Marde Doon
Taa Ba Khawaanad Bar Saleemi za Aani fusoon.
Kaare Marddan Roshani wa Garmi sat,
Kaare Doondaan Heelaah wa Besharmi sat.

Since Satan has the face of a man
(many a devil may pose as Adam;)
It is not proper to entrust your hand to every hand.
The vile man would steal the speech of the ascetics;
He may cast a spell over simple persons.
The work of a (good) man is
(to spread) light and warmth
The work of the vile is sloth and
shame-less-ness.

Rumi and Islam

Though one finds Rumi holding unorthodox views on some topics, one should not commit the mistake of dubbing him as un-Islamic. He had full faith in the core-values of Islam and he held Prophet Mohammad in the highest esteem. He told his followers that the Prophet is their greatest guide. His regard and respect for the Prophet is beyond all shades of doubt. He was a fully committed follower of the Prophet and directed his followers to follow suit. He assured them that by doing so they would successfully reach the goal. Rumi tells that Abu Bakr had reached the goal by simply earning the grace of the Prophet:

Chashme Ahmed Bar Abu Bakri Zadah,
Ou za yak Tasdeeq Siddiq Shudah.

The Prophet cast a glance at Abu Bakr; By this single act of faith, he became a man of truth.

According to Rumi, the moment a man obtains the grace of the Prophet, he achieves the enlightenment:

Man Bar Ein Taalibe Cheez Aamdam;
Sadar Gashtam chun Ba Dahleez Aaamdam.

I had gone to his door as a seeker of wordly things; The moment I reached his doorstep, I became a leader (spiritual) myself.

Rumi believed that the Prophet's stature was much higher than that of even angels. The universe held no secret from him. He could enter even those realms of mystery where angels feared to tread. Rumi gives a poetic description of this extra-ordinary capability of the prophet;

Aql chun Jibreel Goyad Ahmedaa;
Gar Yaki Gaami Na Ham Sojad Maraa.
Tu Maraa ba Gazaa Za Ein Pas-Pesh Raan,
Hade Man Ein Bood Ai Sultaan-e-Jaan.

The intellect-like Gabriel, the angel,
says, O Ahmed! If I take one step
more, it would burn me.
O King of the Soul! Leave me behind
and go ahead. This is my limit.

This verse can be interpreted in another way also i.e. the spiritual knowledge cannot be obtained through reasoning or debates. Debates and disputations baffle and confuse the human mind. The purity of heart and complete devotion are the only means to reach the Divine. Since the Prophet was the epitome of these virtues, hence, he could complete his spiritual journey unhindered.

Rumi, recurringly, refers to this extra-ordinary spiritual power of the Prophet. In his Masnavi, he tells that once the Prophet invited angel Jibreel to accompany him in quest of the Highest Truth. Jibreel declined to do so. He apprehended that if he tried to do so, his wings would be reduced to ashes:

Goft Ou Raa Heen Ba Par Andar Payam,
Goft Rav Rav man Hareefe Tu Nayam.
Baaz Goft Ou Raa Biya Ai Pardaa-soz,
Man Bawaje Khud Na Raftastam Hanoz.
Goft Be roon za Ein Had Ki Khushaffar-Man
Gar Za Nam Pari Ba Sozad Pare-Man.

He (the Prophet) said (to Gabriel), "Come,
fly after me;
He (Gabriel) said, Go, Go! I am not
your companinon.

He (the Prophet). come, O Destroyer
of Veils! I have not reached the
hightest point as yet.
He (Gabriel) answered. O My pleasant
friend! If I fly beyond this limit,
my wings would burn.

It indicates that by following the foot-steps of the Prophet, a devotee can reach the mystical height which is even beyond the capability of angels. The devotees, therefore, need to follow the directions of the Prophet with full commitment and reverence.

The relevance and importance of a guide or a teacher has been explained by Rumi in these words;

Har ki Dar Rah be Qalaaozi Rawad,
Har Do Rozaa Raah sad saala Shawad.

Har ki Taazad sue Kaaba Be Daleel
Ham chu Ein sar Gashtagaan Gar Dad Zaleel
Rav Bajoo yaare Khudaai Raa Tu Zuwad,
Chud chunaan kardi Khuda yaare Tu Buwad.

If a person goes on a journey without a guide, every two day's journey turns into one of a hundred years. He, who speeds towards Kaaba without a guide becomes a subject of ridicule. Seek a friend of God and God would become your friend.

Lord Buddha had also stressed upon the importance of a guide. Once he had been questioned about the need of the guide. Why an educated and informed person should need a guide or a teacher? He was asked.

Buddha asked him, "Do you know the way from Shravasti to Kashi?" The questioner had never been to Kashi. He replied in negative.

Buddha again asked him, "If you were to go to Kashi, what would you prefer; to journey on your own or accompany someone who knows the way?"

The questioneer replied, "To do the journey oneself would be hazarduous; one may lose the way. It would be advantageous to have a person who knows the way."

Buddha said, "The teacher knows the way. He has traveled from Shravasti to Kashi many times. He is fully aware of the hazards and pitfalls of this path. By following him, a traveller would reach Kashi, his destination, safely."

Rumi tells that the Prophet is the best guide among all. By following him a devotee can rise above worldly vices and caprices like attachment and animus, profit and loss and other such selfish considerations. He would be able to forsake even

the desire for the reward in return of his devotion. Selfless love for God would become his life as well as his life's goal. He would not get entrapped in the net of logic:

Laa Ubaali Ishq Baashad Nai Kharad;
Aql Aan Joyad Kazaan sood-e-Barad.
Nai Khadaa Raa Imtehaani Mee Kunad;
Nai Dar Sood Ba zamani Meezanad.

It is love; not reason. It has no care for the consequences; Reason pursues the path of profit. It (Love) never puts God to a test; nor does it weigh profit or loss.

Like Rumi, Vyas also tells us a story about the selfless human conduct in the *Mahabharata*. While in exile, Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandava, spent his days in company of scholars and ascetics. He studied scriptures diligently. He meditated regularly upon the glory of God. He performed *Yajnas*. He gave away in charity whatever he possessed to the needy. In short, he lived a pure and virtuous life.

One day, Draupadi, the common spouse of all the five Pandava brothers, questioned him about the usefulness and importance of his virtuous conduct.

"You have always been truthful. You have been devoted to God. You have been always good to people. But, these virtuous actions have done no good to you. Instead, you had to face problems and hardship at every stage in your life.

"Look at Duryodhana. He is immersed in vices, yet, he enjoys pleasures of life always. Of what use are the good conduct, virtues and devotion to God?"

Yudhishthira calmly replied, "I do not perform good deeds for the sake of any reward or return. I give in charity because

I believe that it is the right thing to do. I worship God because I believe that one must express his reverence for Him. I am not a trader. I do not indulge in bartering virtues for rewards. Devotion and good conduct are not materials for investment or trade. These are duties of a man."

Rumi strongly believes that the total surrender to the will of God and selfless love would definitely unite a devotee with the Lord. The flute would rejoin the clump of bamboo. This blissful union is beyond description. A devotee can experience it but cannot express it. This, according to Rumi, is the highest accomplishment of the human life.

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The tomb of Rumi at Konya (Turkey).

The book in one hand and
the wine-cup in the other, hold we;
Now to Faith and now to heresy
do turn we;
Under this canopy of Heaven,
frail and fickle are we;
Neither absolute Heathens
nor perfect Muslims, are we.

-Mahasti

So extraordinary a book as the Masnavi was never, perhaps, composed by man. It abounds with beauties and blemishes equally great; with gross obscenity, and pure ethics, with exquisite strains of poetry and flat pluralities; with wit and pleasantry mixed with dull jests; with ridicule on all established religions and a vein of sublime piety, it is like a wild country in a fine climate overspread with rich flowers, and with the odour of beasts. I know of no writer to whom the Moulavi can justly be compared, except Chaucer or Shakespear.

-Sir William Jones

Stories from the Masnavi

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi had a very good understanding of the common man's intellectual level. He knew it well that the common man would have no interest in abstract theorisation or dry reasoning. It is a well-known fact that neither readers nor listeners concentrate on the concepts of spiritualization for long. However, when the same concepts are put forth in the form of stories, proverbs and anecdotes, people follow them willingly and are able to understand and appreciate them. Such stories become a part of the folk-lore and are passed from one generation to the other. Rumi had noticed this common trait of people and realized that the audience is able to focus its attention better on characters and incidents of a story compared to the plain theological preaching. Hence, he incorporated a large number of stories, folk-tales, parables and anecdotes in his Masnavi.

A reader finds stories within a story in the Masnavi. In this respect it is akin to Panchatantra. Characters of the story cite anecdotes and short stories in their dialogues to explain and illustrate their contentions. The message or the moral of the story is, generally, given at the end. Rumi quotes from the Holy Book frequently to support his conclusions. This is also to remind the readers that the ideas presented in the Masnavi are in accordance with the core concepts of Islam.

Some interesting stories of the Masnavi are given here.

The Oilsmith and his Parrot

An Oilsmith had a parrot. It was very talented. It could converse like a human-being. The Oilsmith used to talk to it

often. This was his main source of relaxation and entertainment. In his absence the parrot used to look after his shop.

Once, while the parrot was alone, a cat slipped into the shop. The cat tried to grab the parrot. The parrot, to save his life, flew around the shop frantically. The cat pursued it. In this game of hide and seek many oil-jars were dislodged. Oil spilled out of the jars.

On his return, the Oilsmith got very upset to see the damage. He suspected that the mischief had been done by the parrot. Without any enquiry or investigation to find out the real reason, he held the parrot to be responsible and decided to punish it. He hit the parrot hard on its head. The parrot was shocked. Due to the shock it lost its power of speech. It also lost its head-feathers.

One day a bald man happened to pass in front of the shop. As soon as the parrot saw him, it cried out, "Hey ! whose oil-jar did you upset?".

The bald man laughed at the parrot's remark. He could guess that the parrot was mistaking his baldness caused by old age as a mark of punishment. He, too, had been hit on the head by some Oilsmith, the parrot had surmised.

This story holds two messages. The first message is that one should never act hastily, specially in anger. The hasty and foolish action of the Oilsmith had deprived the beautiful parrot of its head-feathers.

It also tells that a person judges another man's personality and actions on the basis of his own experience. The truth or reality may be totally different. Appearances can be deceptive.

Caliph Omar and the Turkish Ambassador

The Emperor of Turkey sent an ambassador to the court of Caliph Omar. He reached Medina and asked about the palace of the Caliph. The people told him that the Caliph did not live in a palace made of stone and bricks. He lived in a spiritual home where only the pure-hearted could enter. The ambassador moved around the city in search of Omar.

One day he found Caliph Omar resting in the shade of a palm tree. Hesitatingly he approached the Caliph. Omar received him very courteously and explained the doctrine of the mystical union with God to him.

The Turkish ambassador posed two questions before the Caliph. How do the souls descend from Heaven to Earth? This was the first question. The second question was, "For what purpose a soul accepts the imprisonment in a body made of flesh and bones?".

Omar told him that the souls descend to earth in obedience to the command of God. The soul is formless, yet, it comes down to earth and assumes a form. On His command, again, it sheds the form and becomes formless.

God speaks into the ears of the rose and the rose blooms. He speaks to the tulip and makes it to blossom. On His command sun lights up the world. When He desires so, sun suffers from the eclipse. It is His power which regulates and controls all motions of the universe.

God has given will-power to man. With this faculty man controls his actions. Through devotion a man can achieve union with God. To attain this state the soul accepts the bonds of flesh and bones.

The Turkish ambassador was satisfied. He accepted Omar's teachings and became a *Sufi*.

The Clever Parrot

A merchant had an Indian parrot as his pet. He kept it confined in a cage always.

One day, he was set to go to India on business. Before the departure he asked the parrot, "Do you have any message for your kinsfolk of India. I shall relay your message, if any, to them".

The parrot said, "Please tell them that I remain confined in a cage all the time".

The merchant promised to the parrot that he would give its message to its brethren on reaching India.

The minute he came across the first flock of parrots on Indian soil, he promptly gave them the message. To his great surprise, a parrot of the flock suddenly tumbled and dropped dead on the ground.

The merchant was very upset. What a fatal message his pet parrot had made him to convey! It had caused instant death to one and misery to all others.

On return he chided his parrot about it. On listening the merchant's account, his pet parrot also fell dead.

The merchant was baffled. However, he opened the cage, picked up the parrot and threw it upon the garbage-heap.

To his amazement, his parrot rose flying from the garbage heap and perched upon the top branch of a nearby tree.

The clever parrot explained to the merchant that its Indian kin had only feigned death. Thus, it had conveyed the message that by emulating its example the caged parrot could obtain its freedom.

Caliph Omar and the Harper

A Harper lived in the capital city of Caliph Omar. His voice was as melodious as that of angel Israfil. He was very popular. People vied with each other in hiring him to sing in their functions, meetings and feasts.

When he grew old, his voice lost its sweetness. Now, no one took any notice of him. He got frustrated. He retired to a graveyard. There he played upon his harp and sang praises of God. Now, he depended completely on God's mercy.

One night, he fell asleep while singing. He had a dream. In the dream he found himself in paradise.

The same night, Caliph Omar heard a divine voice. The voice directed him to proceed to the graveyard and take care of the old man sleeping there. Omar reached the burial-ground immediately. After some efforts, he located the old Harper.

The Caliph gave him sufficient wealth to live comfortably. He also assured the old man that his future needs would be fully met from the royal treasury. If he ever needed any money, he could approach him directly.

The Harper threw away his harp. He was full of contrition. "I bothered God and made Him to approach the Caliph for my selfish needs," lamenting thus, he started beating his head.

The Caliph told him that he need not blame himself. Now he had reached the stage of ecstasy and union with God. His worldly journey was over. He should spend the remaining years meditating upon the Divine.

The Harper was consoled. He stopped playing upon his harp and singing. He spent his remaining life in contemplation of the glory of God.

The Lion's Tattoo

Residents of Qazwin City were very fond of tattooes. They got various parts of their body tattooed extensively. Animals and birds adorned their body-limbs.

There was a person, who was very cowardly and timid. Seeing beautiful tattooes on others bodies, he also resolved to get his body tattooed. He went to the tattoo artist and asked him to tattoo the figure of a roaring lion on his body.

When the needles pricked his skin, he cried out in pain. He could not bear the pain.

He shouted at the artist, "What part of the lion are you making?".

The artist told him, "I am painting the tail."

"Leave the tail alone; it pains a lot. Make some other part," the man instructed.

The artist tried to paint other parts of the lion but the pricks of his needles were beyond the coward's endurance. As soon as the needle pricked him, he shouted out in pain, "Leave this part, make something else."

The artist got disgusted. He broke his needles and threw them away. He poured down his colours upon the earth. He refused to proceed further. The coward's body had only the tattoo of the tip of the tail of the lion.

When a persons undertakes a task, he should be ready and willing to face the hardships that may come his way. If a mirror does not endure the rigours of polishing, how would it shine so brightly?

The Chinese and the Greek Painters

A king had artists from China as well as Greece in his court. Both claimed that they were the best. Many disputes took place between the two on this issue. To settle the dispute, the king put them to a test.

Both groups were allotted a house each. The houses faced each-other.

Decorate the front wall of your house with your artwork. The king would inspect them on completion and declare the winner, they were told.

Both groups set about their task. The Chinese procured all kinds of colours and painted a most beautiful and colourful scenery on their wall.

The Greeks used no colours whatsoever. They cleaned their wall thoroughly and polished it. It became like a mirror.

The king, along with his courtiers, came to inspect their work. All courtiers praised the artistry of the Chinese group.

The king, however, declared the Greeks to be the winners. Their mirror-like wall reflected the painting of the Chinese gloriously. The reflection had softened the colours of the painting and given a dream like quality to it.

Rumi conveys the message by this story that the heart of the Greeks was clean and pure. The Chinese had the material knowledge and skill. The purity of heart is preferable to acquisition of worldly knowledge and skills. Only a pure heart can contain the divine beauty.

The Forebearance of Ali

Hazrat Ali is famous for his bravery. Arabs call him 'the Lion of God.'

He was once engaged in combat against a Magian (Iranian) chief. In the course of the battle, the Magian chief spat on his face.

Ali immediately withdrew from combat. He put down his sword on the ground. The Magian chief was astounded. He was apprehending a vengeful and fierce reprisal.

He asked Ali the reason behind his strange reaction. Ali told him that the Lion of God did not fight for any selfish reason. He was not waging the war to increase his power or to satisfy his own sense of vengeance. It was only to spread the message of God and to provide justice to all. The hateful act of the Magian chief had given rise to anger in his heart. This feeling of anger would have sullied his struggle for the sake of God. Hence, he had withdrawn from the combat.

Ali, also, informed the chief that the Prophet had told him that he was destined to be killed by the hands of his stirrup-bearer, Ibn-Maljun. Ibn-Maljun, himself, had requested Ali repeatedly to kill him and spare him from committing this grave sin. Yet, Ali had refused to do so. He neither killed Ibn-Maljun nor dismissed him from his service. To Ali, death was as welcome as life. Both were gifts of God. He did not wish to interfere with God's will.

The Magian chief was greatly impressed by Ali's conduct. He embraced Islam alongwith all his family members, who totaled fifty, and became a follower of Hazrat Ali.

The King and the Two Slaves

A king purchased two slaves. One of them was very handsome. The other one was very ugly.

The king sent the handsome slave to the bath house and called the ugly one for a conversation.

"The other slave tells me that you are a person of bad character, in fact, a thief. Is it correct ?". The king asked him.

The ugly one replied, "The other slave must be correct. His inward virtues are as good as his outer looks. Whatever has been told by him must be correct."

The king remarked that the physical beauty is only a matter of accident and does not last long. The purity of heart is the substance that endures.

The ugly slave replied that even accidents are acts of God. If God has made anyone beautiful, it must be with a design. It may be an expression of His beautiful thought. An architect first conceives the design of the building in his thoughts. Fruits appear in the trees of the orchard later, first, they appear in the mind of the gardner. Likewise, this world should be taken as a projection of God's thoughts.

The king dispatched the ugly slave to the bath-house and called the handsome one close to him.

The king repeated the same question to the good-looking slave.

"The ugly-looking slave had leveled very serious allegations against you. Do you have anything to say?" the king asked him.

The handsome slave retorted, "That ugly fellow is a liar and a rascal of the first order."

The king banished him from his court and sent him away to a far off place. He kept the ugly slave in his personal service.

Rumi counsels that a person should exercise proper restraint over his speech. The safety of a man lies in holding his tongue. Speech bares the inner personality of a man. Moreover, it is not proper to speak ill of another man.

The Story of Zul-Noon

(Zul-Noon was a famous *Sufi* saint of Egypt in the Third Century)

Zul-Noon used to be always lost in his thoughts. He had no care for worldly matters. His kith and kin and friends took him to be a mad-man and got him admitted into a lunatic asylum.

After sometime they realized the truth that Zul-Noon was not actually mad. He had feigned madness to be left alone so that he could meditate in peace. They went to the asylum to get him released.

"Who are you?" Zul-Noon asked them.

"We are your friends and well-wishers," they replied.

Zul-Noon was very annoyed at this answer. He threw pieces of wood and pebbles at them.

"Had you been my friends," he shouted, "wouldn't you have been here with me?".

Rumi tells that true friends never part company. Adversity provides an opportunity to test one's friends. A true friend would stand by his friend in all circumstances. Fair-weather friends would desert him in difficult times.

The Sufi and his Ass

(In Arabia, an ass – unlike in India, is an honourable and popular mount).

A *sufi* set-out on a journey. He rode an ass. His servant accompanied him. On sunset they stopped at a '*Khanqah*' (a sufi centre). The *sufi* ordered his servant to take care of the ass.

"Give it green fodder and water it well," he commanded.

The servant assured his master that he knew his job well and would take good care of the ass. He did not require to be instructed about his job.

The *sufi* felt assured. He retired to rest. As soon as his master left, the servant got busy to make his own stay comfortable. He left the ass alone. The poor ass spent the night without any fodder or water.

Next day, they commenced the journey. Some other *Sufis* also joined them. The hungry and thirsty ass could not cope with its burden. It stopped after a few steps. Kicks and whiplashes could not spur it on. Ultimately the *sufi* had to dismount and drag it along.

The new companions of the *sufi* concluded that the ass was useless. At the next stop, they quietly sold it off. With the sale-proceeds they purchased food items.

The owner of the ass was blissfully ignorant of these developments. When others invited him to join the feast, he gladly obliged them.

In the course of the feast, they started shouting and singing, "the ass is gone, the ass is gone." The owner of the ass, without realizing the truth, joined them and took up the refrain, "the ass is gone," lustily. The night was spent in this manner.

At the day-break, he asked his servant to saddle his ass and bring it to the door. He wished to continue the journey.

The servant told him that there was no ass to ride now. It had been sold the day before. The money had been spent on the feast which his master had attended.

"You were shouting so joyfully, 'the ass is gone, the ass is gone.' Now, which ass are you talking about?" The servant said.

Rumi advises that one should not blindly follow others. Also, one must attend to one's chores diligently and not depend upon others completely.

The Pet Bear

A kind-hearted man, once, saw a bear caught in the coils of a python in a forest. He took pity on the poor bear. He killed the serpent and freed the bear.

The bear was very grateful. It became a pet of the man. It followed the man like a pet dog. It guarded him day and night. It wished to protect its master from all hazards.

One day the man was sleeping in his bed. The bear stood guarding. Flies came and started hovering over the face of the man. The bear shooed them off. Flies would fly away but return again and again and bother the sleeping man.

The bear got vexed. It lost patience. It decided to teach a lesson to the flies. It picked up a big slab of stone. It wanted to kill all the flies in one stroke.

It brought down the stone-slab upon the flies with all its might. The flies escaped but its master's head was reduced to pulp. He suffered an untimely death.

One should never befriend a fool.

The Story of Four Critical Indians

Four Indians once went to a mosque to offer prayers. They pronounced the Takbir (Allah-O-Akbar) and began their prayer with great fervour.

Meanwhile the Muezzin (the man who calls the faithful to the prayer) came to the mosque.

The first Indian called out to him, "Hey, Muezzin! Have you given the Azaan (call for prayer) yet? It is high time to do so."

The second Indian ticked off his companion, "your words are not connected with the prayer, you have, thus violated the canons of Hadith. Your prayer has gone waste."

The third Indian intervened and pulled up the second, "O fool! Why do you rebuke him? You should rebuke yourself instead." He meant that the second Indian was repeating the mistake committed by the first.

The fourth Indian remarked, "By God's Grace I escaped falling into the pit of ignorance into which these three companions of mine have fallen."

Rumi tells that it is pointless to criticize others or find faults of others. A man should continuously review and examine one's own conduct. The tendency of finding faults in others would detract a devotee from the path of devotion.

The old Man and the Physician

An old man once went to a physician.

"I suffer from headache," he complained.

"It is caused by your advanced age," the physician told him.

"My eyes have become weak," the old man complained again.

"This, too, is because of your old age," the physician said.

The old man continued to speak of his many ailments. Many problems like backache, dyspepsia, shortness of breath, nervous debility and insomnia etc. were troubling him.

The physician informed him that all these ailments were caused by his old age.

The old man lost his patience. He shouted at the physician, "You are a fool. Are you not aware of the fact that God has provided remedies for all ailments."

The physician told him, "Losing patience, irritability and the choler are also the outcome of the dotage. You have lost control over your limbs, hence, anger has over-powered you."

Rumi advises that a man should exercise self control in all circumstances. One should appreciate another man's view-point also.

The Confusion Caused by Languages

Once, four persons – a Persian, an Arab, a Turk and a Greek, were traveling together. They possessed only one Dirham (a coin).

The Persian said, "I shall purchase 'Angoor' with it."

The Arab said, "I shall buy 'Anab'.

The Turk said, "I would like to purchase 'Uzum'.

The Greek said, "I would prefer to buy 'Astaphil' (Staphyle)."

They started quarreling among themselves.

A scholar, who knew all the four languages–Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Greek, happened to overhear their conversation.

He intervened and told the four travelers that all the four words meant the same thing – grapes, and resolved their quarrel.

Likewise, people of different lands have different names for the Divine. All these names – Allah, God, Khuda or Ishwar, mean the same. Quarrelling over names is meaningless.

This conclusion of Rumi is similar to the Indian Vedic concept – *'Ekam Sadvipra Bahudha Vadanti'* (Truth is one, scholars call it by various names).

The Villager and the Townsman

A villager came to the town. He became friendly with a townsman. The townsman looked after him well. The villager, at the time of departure for his village, extended an invitation to his host. "Come and visit us with your family," he said.

For next ten years the villager came regularly to the town and enjoyed the hospitality of his friend. On each visit he renewed his invitation.

On being invited repeatedly the townsman decided to avail of his offer. He reached the villager's house with his wife and children.

"Who are you? I do not know you," the villager said and shut the door.

The poor city-man was in a fix. The sun had set. Clouds were hovering in the sky. Where could he have a shelter for his wife and children?

He implored the villager to provide them shelter. In return of the favour, he was prepared to serve the villager in any way. The villager agreed on the condition that the city-man would serve him as the night watchman and protect his house and garden from wolves.

The townsman agreed readily. He armed himself with a bow and arrows and started patrolling. It was very dark. After some time rain came. He saw the figure of an animal at some distance. Only the outlines were visible. He took it to be a wolf and shot an arrow at it. The arrow hit the mark and the animal collapsed.

It turned out to be the domestic donkey of the villager, not a wolf. Next morning, when the villager saw his dead donkey, he was furious. He started abusing the townsman.

"What a stupid person you are; you could not distinguish between a donkey and a wolf. I could recognize a donkey even in the darkest night," he said.

"You give a good account of your own inhumanity," the townsman retorted. "You could not recognize your friend of ten years standing in the broad daylight. Now, you claim that you could recognize the donkey in the darkest night."

To be true to one's word and to stand by one's friend in adversity are the hallmarks of a good man.

The Prince of Bokhara and his Minister

The prince of Bokhara had a very efficient and loyal minister. However, once the minister happened to commit a very serious mistake. He was fearful of being punished severely for his lapse. To escape punishment, he ran away from Bokhara and hid himself in the hills of Kohistan.

He remained in hiding for ten years. He could not forget his birth-place or his master even for a day. He became home-sick and desired to return.

Ultimately, he decided to return to Bokhara. He resolved that he would surrender before his prince and seek his forgiveness. If the prince decided to punish him, he would accept the punishment gladly.

His well-wishers advised him to desist from this course of action. "The prince is still very cross with you. He may pass the sentence of death," they told the minister.

The minister replied, "I cannot remain away from Bokhara any longer, separation from Bokhara and my master is more painful than the death."

He returned to Bokhara, braving all the hazards of the difficult journey. At Bokhara also, his relatives tried hard to dissuade him from appearing before the prince, but, in vain.

The minister went to the court and threw himself at the feet of his master.

His repentance and loyalty moved the prince greatly. 'What a great store he sets by my kindness and magnanimity,' the prince thought. He got up from his throne and lifted the minister up from the ground. He pardoned his past misconduct and re-instated him in his old office.

Rumi says that if a devotee truly repents his lapses and surrenders totally before God, then, the most benevolent and most merciful Lord would definitely show compassion and pardon him.

The Arab and his Dog

An Arab had a pet dog. He loved it very much. He fondled and patted it all the time. However, he never fed it.

The dog starved to death. The Arab wept and cried loudly at its death. His loud wails disturbed the entire neighbourhood.

They came to him and enquired, "Why are you crying so hard? What has gone wrong?"

The Arab told them that his pet dog was dead. He was mourning over the loss of his much loved pet.

"Why did it die? What was the cause of death?" The neighbours asked.

The Arab told them that the dog had died of hunger.

"Why didn't you feed it? You do not seem to be short of food," the neighbours remarked. They could see the sack of grains stored by the Arab.

"This is my food," the Arab replied. "As it is, my principle is that I do not give anything to anybody without getting the due price. This is the reason why I did not feed the dog."

"Then why do you shed tears for the dog?" The surprised neighbours asked.

"Tears do not cost anything. Therefore I am shedding tears for my dog," the Arab explained.

Rumi says that the love of the Arab for his pet dog was not the true love. Instead of affection it was deception. Similarly, many people only pretend that they love God. Unless a person is prepared to forsake everything for his beloved, true love can not occur.

The Three Travellers

Once three travellers – a Muslim, a Christian and a Jew, set out on a journey together. At the sun-set they stopped at an inn. A philanthropic person gifted a plate of sweets to them.

The Jew and the Christian had finished their evening meal. Therefore they decided to enjoy the sweets next day. They put away the plate of sweets.

This was the month of Ramzan, the month of fasting for Muslims. The Muslim had fasted for the whole day. He was very hungry. He wanted to eat the sweets that very evening. The

other two were not agreeable. They feared that the Muslim would gobble up all the sweets.

The Muslim proposed that the sweets should be divided into three equal portions. One could eat his portion whenever he so desired. The other two did not agree. They reminded him of what Hadis had said about division, "The divider is in hell."

The Muslim argued that this statement of Hadis was about spiritual matters like the unity of God. It should not be applied to dividing a food-material. However, his companions were adamant.

"We can not disregard divine canons," they emphasized.

The plate was put aside and all the three went to sleep. The poor Muslim, tormented by pangs of hunger, also tried to sleep.

Next morning, when they got up, it was decided that each one of them would tell about the dream he had in the previous night to others. The best dreamer would get the plate of sweets in reward.

The Jew was the first to tell – "Prophet Moses came to me in the dream. He took me to Mt. Sinai. On its peak we met the angels. I saw the glory and the marvels of Heaven."

The Christian told that he had met Jesus Christ, who had taken him to the fourth Heaven and shown to him the beautiful and glorious heavenly sight.

The Muslim told them that Prophet Mohammad, may peace be upon Him, had visited him last night in a dream. He had complimented him for his steadfastness in matters of the faith. He had given him the plate of sweets as a reward for having fasted properly in the month of Ramzan. Eat it up, he had commanded. The Muslim had obeyed immediately.

The Jew and the Christian realized that the Muslim had eaten up all the sweets. They were very cross. They started abusing him.

"How could I disregard a command of the Prophet?" The Muslim innocently pleaded.

Rumi tells that those persons, who misinterpret scriptures suffer badly ultimately. Had the Jew and the Christian given the fair share to the Muslim, they would not have lost their shares of the sweets.

Knowledge of the Sounds of Birds and Beasts

A person went to Moses. He requested him for a boon. He wanted to acquire the capability to understand the languages spoken by birds and beasts.

"Human beings use the faculty of speech only to earn their livelihood and deceive each-other. The knowledge of the tongues of birds and beasts would enable me to unravel the mystery of creation and understand the Divine-Scheme," he pleaded.

Moses was disinclined to grant the wish. He felt that this knowledge could do harm to the person. He tried his best to dissuade the man but to no avail. At the end, the man succeeded in prevailing upon Moses. Moses, with God's consent, gave him this capability.

Next day, when the man went to his farm, he found his pet dog and the cockerel in the middle of a heated conversation.

"You enjoy the left-overs of our Master and live well. I get only the dry bread," the dog was complaining.

"Don't you worry. The master's horse is going to die tomorrow. You will have enough meat to satisfy yourself," the cockerel was assuring the dog.

The man could follow their tongue. He immediately sold off his horse. The dog was deprived of the horse flesh. He was very unhappy. He tried to grab the cockerel.

"Be patient," the cock told the dog. "Tomorrow our master's mule will die. You will have all the meat that you desire."

Their master was again eavesdropping on their conversation. He promptly sold away his mule. The dog's desire remained unfulfilled.

Next day, the cock predicted the death of the master's slave. The master sold the slave also.

"You are a cheat," the dog howled at the cock, "I am going to make a meal of you now."

"Hold on for a moment and listen to what I have to say," the cock said to the dog. "Our master is going to breathe his last tomorrow morning. The funeral feast would be held. Enough food would go unconsumed. We would be able to feed upon it for months."

These words made the man to tremble. He ran up to Moses again. This time, he pleaded for his life.

Moses prayed to God and with His help relieved the man of the fear of death. The man died peacefully.

Rumi suggests that a man should be at peace with his destiny. Transgression of the limits imposed on a man's life would bring no good. Hence, one should live within the limits set by God.

This story also tells us that the true knowledge removes the fear of death. On this point, Rumi echoes the sentiments of Kabir, the saint-poet of India, who had observed, "All creatures, who have the physical form, would definitely perish, the wise knows this fact and dies peacefully, fools cry out in dread but die all the same –

Deh Dhare Ko Dand Hai Yah Bhugtai Sab Koi, Gyani Martaa Gyan Se Aur Moorakh Marta Roi.

Mahmood and Ayaz

This is the longest story of the Masnavi. Many short stories and anecdotes are woven within it. According to a popular legend, Rumi had not been able to complete the saga. He had died in the middle of it.

The main story, in brief, is given here.

Ayaz was the favourite and the closest slave of Mohmood, the Sultan of Ghazni. The Sultan had tremendous faith in him. He depended upon Ayaz greatly and shared with him even the inner-most thoughts of his mind. Other members of his court were very jealous of Ayaz.

These courtiers noticed that Ayaz was in the habit of visiting a cellar everyday. He spent sometime all by himself in this cellar. He did not permit anybody to accompany him on these occasions.

They suspected that Ayaz had secretly hoarded some valuables in his cellar. These could be gold-mohurs from Sultan's treasury or highly prized diamonds and gems. They suspected Ayaz of embezzlement. To ensure that this stolen treasure was intact, Ayaz visited the cellar everyday alone, they surmised.

Some were of the opinion that Ayaz was a secret drinker. He went alone to the cellar to indulge in drinking or some other activity prohibited by the faith.

They calculated that they had a valid ground to lodge a complaint against Ayaz before the Sultan. They went in a delegation to the Sultan and charged Ayaz with these allegations.

Sultan Mahmood had no doubts about Ayaz's loyalty and integrity. However, to allay the doubts of his courtiers, he ordered them to follow Ayaz to the cellar that evening.

"If need be, break open the door, seize whatever is found there and produce the same before me," he ordered.

The courtiers were overjoyed. They had got the opportunity to stab Ayaz in the back – something that they had been longing and planning for long.

That evening they fully complied with the Sultan's command. However, they found only a set of old clothes and a pair of worn-out shoes in the cellar.

Ayaz did not want the rich circumstances of the court and the favour of his master to go to his head and warp his out look. He used to put on his old clothes and shoes everyday for some time to remind himself of his humble origin and the poor old days. This helped him to ward off false pride.

The courtiers came back shame-faced. They beseeched the Sultan for forgiveness. Sultan Mahmood asked Ayaz to decide their fate. He was at liberty to pronounce any sentence to punish these courtiers for leveling false allegations. The Sultan would endorse his verdict.

All courtiers, now, feared for their lives. Ayaz would, certainly, send them to the gallows, they apprehended. Ayaz,

however, did not punish them. 'Only God can reward or punish men for their good or bad deeds,' he believed.

This story of the Masnavi sets an ideal picture of humility, loyalty and magnanimity before the readers.

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Dara-Shikoh listening to Sufi spiritual discourse (1640-50 A.D).
Courtesy, National Museum,
New Delhi

All those difficult and lofty thoughts, which I had been seeking and had not attained as yet, I discovered in this resume of ancient revelation (Upanishads) which is the first of all heavenly books and which is also the rock of all research and the ocean of Divine Unity (Tauhid)and, to crown all, is in consistency with the Great Quran and commentaries.....May all those who, renouncing the desires of the wretched self and spurred under lucky stars, by genuine wish to please God, happen to read and understand this translation entitled 'Sirr-i-Akbar', Considering it a version of the word of God and abandoning all prejudices, will attain eternal salvation as well as freedom from apprehensiveness and worry of this mundane earth.

-Dara-Shikoh

Sirr-i-Akbar (Introduction)

Rumi and India

One finds a great similarity between *sufi* philosophical thoughts and literary traditions and the concepts of the Vedanta School of Indian Philosophy and the Bhakti Literature. Vedanta's basic principle is that the entire universe is a manifestation of the Divine. A person, who is fully conscious of the presence of the Divine Element within his form, is equated with the Divine by it.

Sufis, too, believe that a devotee, who comes to realize the true and real nature of his self – which is part of the Divine, becomes one with the Divine. All differences cease to exist. When a *sufi* reaches this stage, he proclaims truthfully that 'He is the Truth, (An-Al-Haq).

The Vedantic path is a path of knowledge. Self-realization and self-knowledge are the key concepts of this school of philosophy. Yoga i.e. full control over body and mind, and austerities are the main means used by the Vedantins to reach this higher state.

Sufis also set great store by knowledge. They, too, evolved a system, akin to yoga, to reach the state of the self-realization. Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, in his initial years, was an ardent pursuer of this path of knowledge. However, the meeting with Shams Tabrezi changed the course and he took to the path of love and devotion. He found the devotional path to be more natural, satisfying and fulfilling compared to the dry and dreary path of knowledge.

Selfless love for God, total surrender to His will and the visualization of His glory and beauty everywhere is termed as

'*Bhakti*' (devotion) by Indian sages. This was the belief of the *Sufis* as well.

Sufi saints, specially Rumi, found music and dance to be the most efficacious means to achieve the state of unity with God. Chanting the names of the Lord and dancing to its tune and beat transports a devotee to the state of ecstasy. It gives him the super-consciousness. A person can visualize God only in such a state. He can not, otherwise, be visualized in this physical world.

The Indian Bhakti tradition also considered music and dance, *Samkirtana*, to be the most natural way to achieve this end. On this score the views of the two are identical. Historically speaking, Indian Vedantic tradition precedes *Sufism* and the *Bhakti Marg* follows it. Close commerdial and cultural interaction had existed between India and the Middle-East from ancient times. The pre-Vedic and Vedic Aryans were spread over India, Iran, Afghanistan and the adjoining lands. The *Vedas*, *Puranas* and the ancient Indian literary texts have many references pertaining to these areas.

Many cities of the present-day Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Sinkiyang (China) and nearby regions had become important centres of Buddhism in the Buddhist period. The famous silk-route – the main artery of the trade between India and China, passed through this region. The Chinese travellers and pilgrims came to India via this route. Indian preachers and teachers also followed this route to reach China. Many Sanskrit works dealing with theology, philosophy, medicine, mathematics and astronomy had been translated into Chinese and other regional languages in this period. This region had become a hub of Indian education and culture. Adoption of Indian philosophical concepts by the local scholars was a natural sequel.

By 13th century the Afghan rule was firmly established in Northern India. Soldiers, merchants and scholars of various disciplines came to India from Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq and other Arabian lands frequently. Some scholars like Al-Beruni had studied Indian culture in depth.In the period between the 10th and the 13th century, many Indian works of philosophy, sciences and literature had been translated into Arabic and Persian. These works were avidly studied by scholars of these lands. Jalaluddin Rumi is most likely to have studied some of these works. Abdul Qasim Qalandari, a famous *sufi* saint, had translated *Yoga-Vasishtha*, an eminent work of Indian philosophy into Persian in 11th century. *Panchatantra*, a collection of stories containing moral lessons had been translated into Arabic as well as Persian in the reign of Caliph Haroon-ul-Rashid. This translated version was named *Kaleela-O-Dimna*. Its stories were very popular in Iran, Iraq and other parts of the Middle-East. Many stories found in *Ilahi-Nama* and *Museebat-Nama* of Sheikh Farid-ud-Din Attar are the modified versions of the stories of *Panchatantra*. Many *Panchatantra* stories are found in the Masnavi of Maulana Rumi also. Rumi clearly acknowledges that he has borrowed these stories from *Kaleela-O-Dimna*. The famous fable of the elephant in the dark room – told by Rumi, Tauhidi and Ghazali besides many other, has been adapted from a Buddhist fable of the 'Elephant and the Ten Blind men.' This fable was used to illustrate the unreliability and the worthlessness of the knowledge derived from a solitary sense organ.

One comes across traces of *Upanishads, Yoga Vashishtha* and Vedantic texts in many passages of Rumi's works.

Rumi was born at Balkh, the centre of interaction between Indian and the Central Asian region. In the Buddhist Period many Buddhist monasteries flourished at Balkh. This close cultural inter-action had left its imprint upon the ideas and outlook of the people of this area. It is very likely that Rumi imbibed some

Indian philosophical thoughts from this source. However, he might have come to acquire ideas akin to Indian concepts through his own contemplation and experience.

These similarities have endeared Rumi to Indian readers greatly. He is their favourite poet.

The love and attachment of Rumi for his friend and mentor, Shams Tabrezi, reminds an Indian reader of his own tradition of the 'Guru-Shishya Parampara'. Rumi's declaration that till he became a slave of Shams Tabrezi, he could not attain the status of Mulla of Rum, Moulvi Harghiz Na Shud Mulla-e-Rum, This is in full accordance with the Indian tradition of full submission to one's teacher.

A teacher has been accorded highest position by Indian tradition from the earliest days. The teacher pulls out his disciple from the darkness of ignorance. He provides him the vision of knowledge and wisdom. He leads his disciple to enlightenment. Hence, teacher has been equated with God. *Shvetashvetara Upanishad* says.

Propitiate your teacher as you propitiate God. He would lead you to enlightenment.

Rumi echoes this idea, when he says:

Chun Di Kardi Zaat Murshed Raa Qabool.
Ham Khuda Dar Zaat Aamad Ham Rasool.

If you accept anyone as your spiritual guide, you will discover God and the prophet, both, in him.

The medieval India saw the rise of many Guru-based religious sects and cults. The impact of the *sufi* belief about the importance of the Guru upholstered this phenomena greatly. The Sikhism, Kabir-Panth, Dadu-Panth, Radha Swami Sect etc., following this tenet, accord the highest status to their Gurus.

The belief, that, if a person follows his preceptor's direction unquestioningly, he would he able to rise above the worldly affairs and achieve unity with God, was adopted by these religious orders from the *Sufi* tradition. The couplet quoted earlier is cited by the followers of these sects often in support of their belief.

Nanak, Kabir and many other religious leaders of this period, who subscribed to the *Nirguna* (formless-Divine) school were highly critical of the religious rigidity and ritualism. They directed their disciples to discard these formalities and follow the path of charity and total surrender to God's Will.

This doctrine is the hallmark of *Sufis* also. Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi is the leader of the *Sufis* who subscribe to this view. He declared boldly.

Millate-Ishq Az Hamaa Millat Judaast,
Aashiqaan Raa Mazhab-O-Millat Khudaast.

The creed based on love is different from other sects. God, Himself, guides the sect of lovers.

Kabir and other poet saints of the *Bhakti* cult repeatedly echo this view of Rumi. One frequently comes across sayings, like, '*Hari Ko Bhajai So Hari Ka Hoi*' (Whoever worships Hari (God), belongs to Him) and '*Samajhe Ka Mat Ek Hai, Ka Pandit Ka Sheikh*' (All those who understand the reality, hold the same view. It is immaterial whether one is a Pandit (Hindu Brahmin priest) or a Sheikh (Muslim religious leader)). It is difficult to say whether the *Bhakti*-poets had come across the works of Rumi. A number of Faqirs and Dervishes roamed around those days. It is very likely that they propagated the ideas of Rumi and other *Sufi* saints in India. The *Bhakti* poets seem to have got these ideas from them.

God resides inside the heart of a devotee. He can be found only there, nowhere else. It is futile to search for Him

in temples, houses of worship or the solitude of hills, jungles and mountains. This is a favourite theme with all *Bhakti* poets – belonging to the *Nirguna* (formless) and the *Saguna* (the manifested one) schools both. Rumi also holds the similar view:

Goft Paighambar Ki Haq Far mooda Ast,
Man Na Ganjam Hech Dar Baalaa-O-Past.
Dar Dil-e-Momin Ba Ganjam Ein Ajab,
Gar Maraa Khwaahi Az Aan Dil Haa Talab.

According to the Prophet, Lord has proclaimed, No place, high or low, can contain me. It is a wonder but true that I live in the hearts of my devotees. If you desire to find me, search for me there.

Yoga-Vasishta expresses a similar view. The Rishi says:

"The person, who searches for God elsewhere – while He is present in his heart, is like a man who does not care for the *Kaustubh* diamond (a most valuable gem) in his hand and looks around for worthless pebbles."

The view expressed by Rumi in the above verse has been reiterated by the saint-poets of medieval India again and again, Kabir states:

Mo Ko Kahan Dhoondo Bande Main To Tere Pass Mein.

My devotee! Where are you looking for me, I stand by your side. He says again:

Tera Sain Tujhh Mein Jyon
Puhupan Mein Baas;
Kastoori Ka Mirag Jyon
Phir Phir Dhoonde Ghaas.

Your Lord is within you like the fragrance in a flower; you are like the musk deer which searches for the source of his own smell in the grass.

Guru Nanak Dev advises:

Kahe Re Ban Khojan Jai, Sarab Niwasi Sada Alepa Tere Ang Samaai.

Why do you go to forest in His search? He, the Omnipresent one, though totally unattached to anything, is present within you.

Vedanta's core-belief is omnipresence of the Divine. The *Bhakti* saints, taking cue from this principle, ask their followers to visualize the Divine in everything:

'Jit Dekhom Tit Shyam Biraaje'

Wherever I look, I find Krishna enshrined; and *'Siya – Ram Mai Sab Jag Jaani'*

I believe that all things of the world are manifestations of Sita and Ram.

These expressions are based on this fundamental Vedantic doctrine.

Rumi also stresses upon the universality of the Divine. Rumi's object of veneration does not dwell in the Seventh Heaven, He is present everywhere. A devotee is required to forsake the feeling of duality only in order to visualize Him:

Dui Raa Chun Badar Kardam
Yake Deedam Do Aalam Raa,
Yaki Beenam Yaki Joyam
Yaki Khwaanam Yaki Daanam.

When I removed the sense of duality from my mind I saw the two worlds as one. Now I see only One; I search for

only One; I desire for only One and I hold (believe in) only One.

One finds a striking similarity between the concept of *Tauheed* propagated by Rumi and *Advaita* enunciated by Indian Vedantins.

Rumi's theory of creation and the evolutionary process is also very similar to the Indian concept of reincarnation. According to Rumi matter is the basic element of evolution. Matter contains energy within. Minerals existed in the first stage of creation. The energy contained in these inanimate elements manifested itself as the first living organism. A new form of existence, the vegetation, came into being. The process continued. From the stage of plantlife, the evolutionary process progressed to the stage of animal life and from animal life to human life. A man of intellect can go further. On the basis of his endeavours he can gain the form of an angel. Through devotion to God, he can achieve unification with God and obtain release from the cycle of birth and death.

Similar accounts-sometimes almost identical, are found in Indian Vedic literature, Puranic stories, other Hindu theological works and the Buddhist –Jain traditions. This similarity between Rumi's views and the Indian view is remarkable.

Among *Sufis*, this view is held only by Rumi. This view is very different from the views held by theologians of the Middle-Eastern and European faiths. Had anyone but Rumi expressed this view so explicitly, which is contrary to the Islamic concept of creation, he would have faced severe punishment at the hands of contemporary society and state. Rumi's high spiritual accomplishment earned him the reprieve.

The friendship and intimacy between Shams Tabrezi and Rumi remind us of the close relations between the Indian *sufi* saint Nizamuddin Aulia and his disciple, the famous poet-

musician Amir Khusro. The friendship of these two sets of persons belonging to two different lands stand, even today, as the ideal examples of friendship and love.

Sufism achieved its peak in India under the patronage of Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal emperor, Shah-Jahan. He attempted to combine the fundamentals of Indian philosophy and '*Tasawwuf*' of *Sufism* and propagate a religious doctrine which was based on logic, equality and unity. In his book, *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (Confluence of Oceans), he analyses and discusses at length the similarity in the views held by Indian philosophers and *Sufi* thinkers and highlights the convergence of their ideas on the vital issues of spiritualism. Unfortunately in the struggle for power, he lost the battle and his life to Aurangzeb, his orthodox and intolerant brother. The stream of integrated ideas was lost in the dry desert sand-dunes of orthodoxy.

Rumi's style of composition impressed and influenced the poetic style of the medieval Hindi Poetry considerably. Persian language and literature were customarily studied by all educated and cultured sections of Indian soeicty in this period.

Educated Indians were familiar with poet-laureates of Persian like Rumi, Hafiz and Sadi and their works. The literary style of the Masnavi, containing stories and sub-stories with moral contents won their appreciation. Malik Mohammed Jayasi, a *sufi* himself, composed his epic Padmavat in the style of the Masnavi. Later Goswami Tulsi Das adopted this style to compose his immortal work, *Ram-Charit-Manas* or the Hindi *Ramayana* decidedly by far the finest literary work of Hindi literature of all times. This is the reason why the structure and style of *Ram-Charit-Manas* is different from the style of Sanskrit epics.

The reformist movements of 18th and 19th century India, which aimed at religious and cultural synthesis, were much

motivated and influenced by *sufi* thoughts and works. Ideas of Rumi and Hafiz appealed to them most. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of *Brahmo-Samaj* was an accomplished Scholar of Persian. He found great similarity between the tenets of Vedant and *Tasawwuf*. This motivated him to establish a new religious order based on reason and logic; on universally acceptable spiritual principles. Many other religious movements like the *Pranami Sundar Sath Sampraday* founded by Mahamati Pran Nath, Kripal Ruhani Satsang founded by Sant Kripal Singh and Radhaswami-Satsang were also greatly influenced by *Sufism*. The revolutionary ideas of Rumi were valued very highly by them. Rumi is frequently referred to in the sermons and sayings of the founders of these sects.

The modern Indian literature also bears the stamp of Rumi. Rabindra Nath Tagore appears to have been very impressed by Rumi. Many verses of his most famous work, *Geetanjali* reflect the ideas and sentiments of Rumi. Some examples given below bear witness to this fact:

Geetanjali

(i When the heart is hard and parched up,
Come upon me with a shower of Mercy.
When desire blinds the mind
with a delusion and dust,
O Thou Holy one! Thou Wakeful,
Come with Thy light and Thy thunder.

Diwan-e-Shams

Zameen Khushk Labam,
Man Biyaar Aabe Karam,
Zameen Za Aabe Tu
Yaabad Gul-O-Gulistani.

I am like a parched field, Let the water of generosity rain down. The water would make it. A land of roses and rose –beds.

Geetanjali

(ii) Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrows.

Diwan-e-Shams

Ishq Bood Khoob Jahaan, Maadare Khoobane Jahaan,
Khaaq Shaved Guhar Az Aan Nakhar Kunad Maadare Az Ein .

Love is the most beautiful thing in this world;
It is the mother of all beauties.
Pearls are like dust particles around,
The Mother is proud of this fact.

Geetanjali

(iii) The time that my journey takes is
Long and the way of it is long;
I came out on the chariot
of the first Gleam of light.

Diwan-e-Shams

Chun Zarraa-e- Rasan Baazam
Az Noore-Rasan Saazam.

As a trapeze artist,
like the atom,
On a rope of light,
I balance myself.

Geetanjali

(iv) When Thou Commandest me to sing,
It seems my heart would break with pride.

And I look to Thy face, and
Tears come to my eyes.

Diwan-e-Shams

Dil Gofteh Man Naai Weem
Naalaan Nazdam Haae Weem.

The heart said, "I am His flute; My cries take life from His own breath.

Geetanjali

(v) *I have got my leave.*
Bid me farewell,
My brothers,
I bow to you all
and take my departure.

Diwan-e-Shams

Naamaa Raseed Zaan Jahaan Bahar
Musaafirat Baram;
Azam Rajoo-e-Mi Kunam
Rakhat Ba Charkh Mi Baram.

A letter from the outer world has reached me,
Summoning me back;
I have resolved to go to heaven,
bag and baggage.

These similarities of thoughts and views have brought Rumi very close to the Indian heart. He is a favourite of Indian men of letters as well as common readers. For Indians, Rumi would remain a constant source of joy and spiritual inspiration.

Unification with Divinity through selfless love and devotion is the basic doctrine of Sufism. Though Sufism originated in Central Asia, yet its concepts and practices are very close to Indian philosophical traditions of Vedanta and Bhakti. Sufism is much adored and venerated in India.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi is one of the brightest stars on the firmament of Sufi mysticism and Persian poetry. This book provides a vivid and interesting account of his life, times, mystic experiences and literary works. It also briefly discusses Sufi doctrines and practices.

Dr. Trinath Mishra, the author, an ex-IPS officer, is a scholar of Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian.

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